

# **Adventures of a Landing Craft Coxswain**

Sterling S. Funck

United States Navy, 1941 - 1945

Boatswain Mate 1<sup>st</sup> Class

Golden Shellback



Christian A. Funck



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## **Preface**

My grandfather, Sterling Funck, enlisted in the United States Navy on Monday, December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1941. During World War II he participated in amphibious operations spanning the African, European, and Pacific campaigns.

In 1998 I approached Sterling to learn about his experiences during World War II. At that time I had the idea that I might be able to produce a few pages of information that family members would find interesting regarding his role in the War. For various reasons, this project grew in scope beyond my original plans.

This work is comprised of three key themes. First and foremost, it provides a record of Sterling's personal experiences during his wartime service. Second, it sets the context of Sterling's experiences within the larger operations and battles within which he participated. Third, it traces the evolution of the Navy's approach and execution of amphibious operations during World War II and describes the impact of these changes on Sterling's role as a landing craft coxswain aboard an Attack Transport.

I hope that you find this work to be of interest.

Christian A. Funck  
Lancaster, Pennsylvania  
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## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Sterling for the many hours that he spent answering my questions, sharing his memories, and detailing his experiences from his wartime service. Like many of his generation, Sterling did not talk much about his wartime experiences in the years following the war. His willingness to answer my questions, along with his patience as I worked through the details of this project, are greatly appreciated.

Second, I would like to thank Mr. John L. Cole for publishing the *Calversion: Official Newsletter of the Men of the U.S.S. Calvert APA-32*. The *Calversion* is a semi-annual newsletter dedicated to sharing the history of the U.S.S. *Calvert* and the experiences of the men who served on the ship during its years of service. Third, a wealth of information concerning amphibious operations during World War II is available in published form and on the World Wide Web. Finally, my appreciation and thanks are also owed to all of the veterans and the families of these veterans who are keeping their stories alive on the World Wide Web.

The content presented in this work is comprised of information derived from both published and unpublished works. Sections that list no explicit source are based on conversations and dialog with Sterling Funck that occurred between 1998 and 2005. Footnotes are provided to indicate the source for content such as direct citations and content derived from published and unpublished materials. Maps presented within the document were created and compiled using the source(s) listed in each map's legend. Most photographs are sourced from Sterling's private photograph collection. Where photographs, charts, and diagrams are based on published information, the source information is also provided via footnotes. A complete Works Cited section is included in Appendix G.

Every effort was taken to align Sterling's experiences with historical records. However discrepancies do exist. When known, these discrepancies are noted via footnotes. Sterling explains:

As time goes on and it gets further back it is tough to remember the details and timing of events. See, what seems like a long time to a person that wasn't involved in it, it went by fast for us, you were so busy and everything just went by so fast.

Even after an invasion, after aircraft had done some bombing or aircraft flew over and you went to general quarters, half hour after it was over you had different versions of what went on. And I'm sure that there were a lot of logs and a lot of things that went down as official, that weren't quite as official as some things that were just pushed to the side and said didn't amount to nothing. And very few guys kept diaries. First you weren't allowed to keep diaries, it was against the regulations. Second, no one really thought to keep a diary, at least I didn't.

For example, if you asked the Captain down through all the guys on the *Calvert*, each would give you a different answer right now if you asked them "do you remember hitting a whale or a submarine?" We hit something, it damaged the bow, shuttered the whole ship. I didn't know what it was. Some said it was a whale, some said it was a submarine. I assumed that it was a whale 'cause you didn't hear crunching. You'd think if you hit a submarine you'd hear something. But being in the 2<sup>nd</sup> division we didn't see what actually happened, and there were lots of stories that went around.

## Introduction

Sterling Funck enlisted in the United States Navy on Monday, December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1941. During World War II he participated in amphibious operations spanning the African, European, and Pacific campaigns. The next few pages provide the important contextual information regarding the content and structure of this work.

## Chronology

Boot Camp – Coasters Harbor Island, Newport Naval Training Station, RI – December 1941

USS *Harry Lee* AP-17/APA-10 – January 1942 to October 1942

USS *Calvert* AP-65/APA-32 – October 1942 to August 1944

Operation Torch – Safi, French Morocco – November 1942

Operation Husky – Scoglitti, Sicily – July 1943

Operation Galvanic – Makin Atoll – November 1943

Operation Flintlock – Roi-Namur, Marshall Islands – February 1944

Operation Forager – Saipan, Mariana Islands – June 1944

Operation Forager – Tinian, Mariana Islands – July 1944

Temporary Assignments Stateside – August 1944 to October 1945

Terminal Island Receiving Station, San Pedro California

USS *Facility* AM-233

Mine Assembly Base 128, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii

US Naval Hospital #10, Pensacola, Florida

USS *Hidalgo* AKA-189

Separation & Discharge – Bainbridge, MD – November 1945

## Concepts

The following terms and concepts are explained to clarify the organization and execution of the amphibious operations described throughout this work:

Amphibious Operation: The overall organization of an amphibious force whose purpose is to perform an amphibious assault. An amphibious operation is launched from sea by naval and landing forces embarked in ships and craft.

Amphibious Force: The naval and landing force together with the supporting forces such as escorts, fire support vessels and supply vessels who are trained, organized, and equipped to carry out an amphibious operation.

Transport: A naval class of ship that carries various types of landing craft and transports marine, army and navy assault personnel and equipment to the point of attack in amphibious combat operations and launches them against enemy-held shores in those craft. Transports were initially designated as AP (Auxiliary fleet, Personnel complement). Later in the war transports were reclassified as APA (Auxiliary fleet, Personnel complement, Attack force) and were referred to as Attack Transports.

Landing Force: Comprised of the troops who are organized for an assault. Also included in the landing force are the boat crews who deliver the troops to the beaches via landing craft as well as the landing parties who support the assault landings by organizing the beach areas during the assault. The landing force bears the brunt of an enemy's defenses.

Landing Craft: Boats specifically designed for carrying troops and equipment to the beach and capable of beaching, unloading, and retracting.

Beach Party: The first of two key coordinating groups that operate in an amphibious landing. The Beach Party is comprised of Naval personnel. They are responsible for establishing and marking the boat lanes, and then directing the incoming landing craft through the lanes. The members of the Beach Party generally precede the assault waves and are nearly always the first to hit the beaches.

Shore Party: The second of two key coordinating groups that operate in an amphibious landing. The Shore Party is responsible for coordinating the men and materials on the beaches and movement off of the beaches to make way for additional men, supplies, and equipment. The Shore Party is comprised of elements of the ground force making the landing, e.g., Army or Marines personnel.

D-Day: The day on which a combat operation is to be initiated. When used in combination with figures and plus or minus signs, these terms indicate the length of time preceding or following a specific action. Thus, D+3 means 3 days after D-day, and so on.

H-Hour: The hour on which a combat attack or operation is to be initiated. When used in combination with figures and plus or minus signs, these terms indicate the length of time preceding or following a specific action. Thus, H-3 means 3 hours before H-hour, H+75 minutes means H-hour plus 1 hour and 15 minutes, and so on.

24-Four Hour Time: The system of designating time in a 24-hour cycle, instead of the civilian 12-hour cycle, to avoid the possible confusion of AM vs. PM. In this system, midnight is the starting point, named 0000. One minute after midnight is 0001, one minute after one P.M. is 1301, etc. When describing the end of the day, midnight is termed 2400.

Division (Navy): A group of several ships of similar type forming a tactical unit under a single command in the U.S. Navy. E.g., Transportation Division.

Division (Ship): One of the working departments aboard ship, such as deck, gunnery, engineering, navigation, supply, operations, etc. A smaller ship may have only a few divisions (e.g., a minesweeper) while a larger ship (e.g., a aircraft carrier) may have many more divisions.



## Common Abbreviations

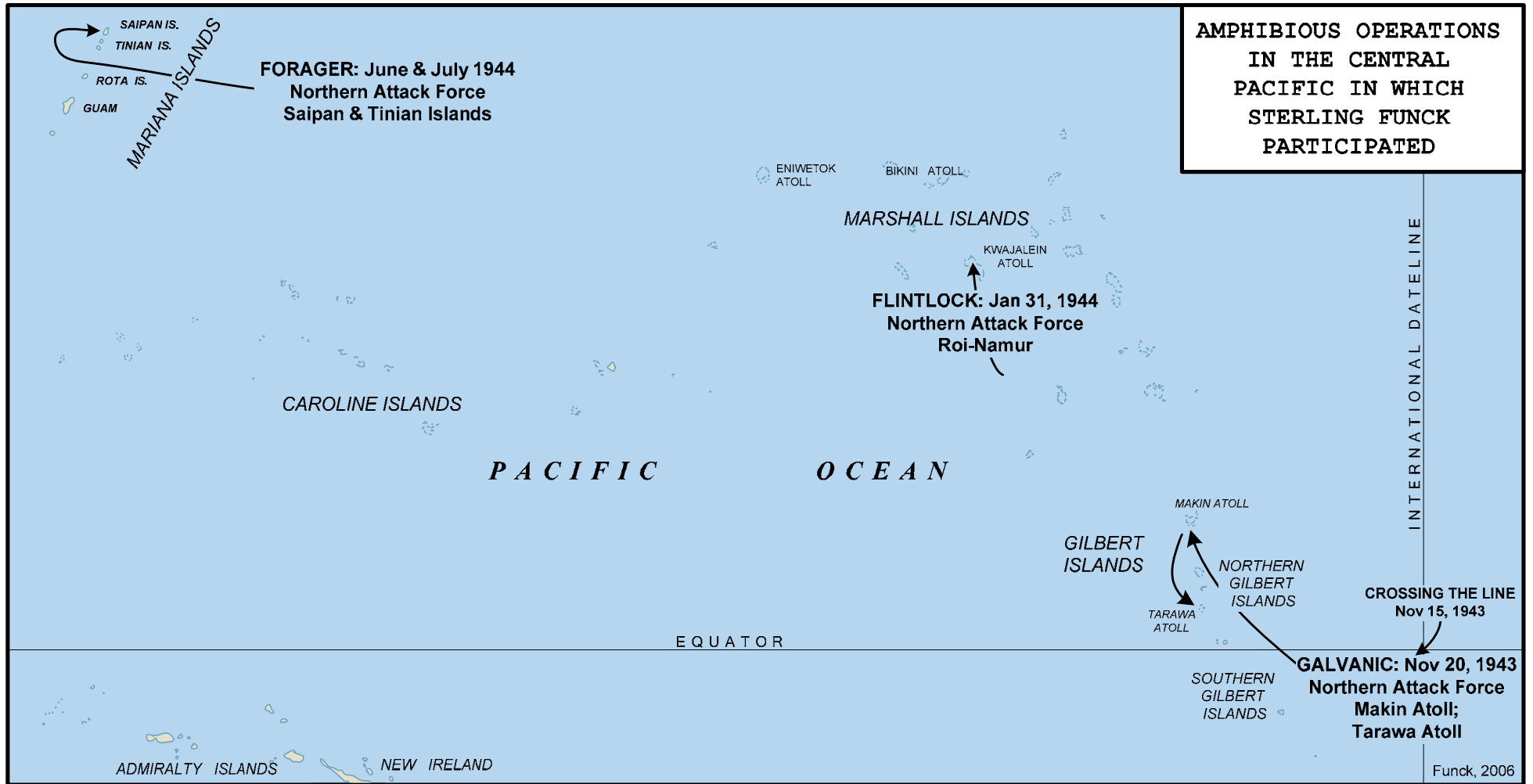
Abbreviations are used frequently throughout this work. The following abbreviations are those most commonly found throughout this document:

AK, AKA	Cargo (Ship), Attack Cargo (Ship)
AM	Minesweeper (Ship)
AP, APA	Transport (Ship), Transport Attack (Ship)
AS	Apprentice Seaman
ATB	Amphibious Training Base
BLT	Battalion Landing Team
BM1C	Boatswain's Mate 1 <sup>st</sup> Class
BM2C	Boatswain's Mate 2 <sup>nd</sup> Class
BM3C	Boatswain's Mate 3 <sup>rd</sup> Class
COX	Coxswain
LCI	Landing Craft, Infantry
LCP	Landing Craft, Personnel
LCM	Landing Craft, Mechanized
LCS	Landing Craft, Support
LCT	Landing Craft, Tank
LCVP	Landing Craft, Vehicle, Personnel
LVT	Landing Vehicle, Tracked (a.k.a., Alligator, Amphtrac, Amtrack, Amphibious Tractor)
NRS	Naval Reserve Station
NTS	Naval Training Station
OOD	Officer of the Deck
RCT	Regimental Combat Team
R/S	Receiving Station
SC1	Seaman 1 <sup>st</sup> Class
SC2	Seaman 2 <sup>nd</sup> Class
SCTC	Small Craft Training Center
TF	Task Force
TG	Task Group
TRANSDIV	Transport Division
USRN	United States Navy Reserve
USS	United States Ship
XO	Executive Officer

## Operations in North Africa and Europe



## Operations in the Central Pacific





# **Adventures of a Landing Craft Coxswain**

**Sterling Funck, United States Navy, Boatswain Mate 1<sup>st</sup> Class, Golden Shellback**



## Pre-War Years

Sterling Funck was born on June 18<sup>th</sup>, 1924 in Palmyra, Pennsylvania. He was the only son of George and Tillie Funck. Eleanor, Fern, and Marlene were his younger sisters. Sterling's father worked as a blacksmith. His mother ran a general store attached to the family's home.

While Sterling was still young his father befell a serious back injury. During his father's recovery in a Philadelphia hospital Sterling's mother sold the general store and the blacksmith shop. The family moved to Ono where Sterling's grandfather, Elmer Shuey, owned a general store. Money was tight. Sterling was put to work in his Grandfather's store. His typical day started at 6 A.M. He helped out at the store until it was time for him to leave for the start of school. After school he returned to the store and typically worked until 9 P.M. On Saturdays he worked from 6 A.M. until late in the afternoon.

Upon his father's return home the family decided to move to Florida with the intent of buying a hotel. However, President Roosevelt closed the banks just a few days prior to their planned departure<sup>1</sup>. The family canceled their move and chose to remain in Pennsylvania. Sterling's father found work delivering bread as an independent driver for Ruhl's bakery. His father made twelve cents profit on his first day of business.<sup>2</sup>

Sterling entered seventh grade in August of 1937. Not far into the school year he passed the exam for entrance into the Jonestown High School. He was looking forward to moving into high school and he had plans to try out for baseball team the following spring. His father had different plans: "My parents never believed in high school. My dad only went through third grade. As soon as he found I had passed my exam for high school, I attended a one-room school house near Fort Indiantown Gap at the time, I had to quit." The family was feeling the years of economic hardship. The Great Depression was in full effect. Sterling's father removed him from school and sent him to work full time for his Grandfather to help earn money for the support of the family.

In 1938 Sterling's father purchased a dairy farm in Grantville, PA.<sup>3</sup> Sterling continued to support his family by assisting in the day-to-day work on the farm. Hardship struck in the summer of 1941 when an outbreak of Bangs disease infected the family's entire herd of milking cows. The only option was to sell the cows as beef cattle for slaughter and let the stalls stand empty for a calendar year. With all prospects of farm income eliminated, Sterling's father found work outside the farm. His father worked for a brief time at Ft. Indiantown Gap. He then returned to driving a bread truck for Ruhl's bakery.

Sterling was also expected to find a job to help support the family. He and his friend Clarence Winters<sup>4</sup> had many opportunities to observe the Pennsylvania National Guard hold exercises and drills on neighboring farms given the close proximity of Fort Indiantown Gap. With limited employment prospects to be found locally, Sterling and Clarence decided that their best option would be to join the Army. They both had dreams of joining the Calvary.

When it finally came time to enlist, Clarence reconsidered and chose to not go through with idea. Even though Sterling was only 17 at the time, and he would have to lie about his age, he remained committed on enlisting in the Army. However, during his first meeting with the Army recruiter his true age was found out and he was promptly sent home. Sterling gave little further thought of military service and he found work at the A.S. Kreider Shoe Factory in Palmyra.

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<sup>1</sup> March 6<sup>th</sup>, 1933

<sup>2</sup> Sterling's Mother, Tillie Funck, kept meticulous records for every facet of the family's business and personal financial affairs.

<sup>3</sup> Sterling does not remember the exact date, however the move to the farm occurred sometime between 1938 and 1939.

<sup>4</sup> Clarence's father, George Winters, was also a blacksmith. George Funck's mother died when he was only six weeks old, George Winters' parents took responsibility for raising George Funck. George Winters trained Sterling's father as a blacksmith. Growing up, the Funck family and the Winters' family were very close. Sterling and Clarence considered themselves cousins even though they were 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> cousins removed.

## The War Begins

Sterling was with his family visiting the Copenhaver family in downtown Harrisburg on Sunday, December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1941.<sup>5</sup> During dinner news of Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor came over the radio. On the drive home Sterling informed his parents that he was going to enlist in the Marines the next day. Interestingly, the thought of joining the Marines hadn't crossed Sterling's mind until the events of that evening. Although he was still only 17, the Marines and the Navy accepted recruits his age as long as parental permission was granted. Had he been of legal age, he likely would have given the Army another try. Like many of his generation, Sterling just felt it was the right thing to do: "I really can't say why I joined. I guess just by enlisting the day after Pearl Harbor pretty much illustrates my sentiments as anything. I felt that they needed everyone they could get."

On Monday morning Sterling rose early and hitchhiked to Harrisburg.<sup>6</sup> The armed services recruiting office was located downtown in the old Federal building. When Sterling arrived at the recruiting office and was met by a Navy officer. Sterling inquired about joining the Marines, but the Navy officer promptly told him that the Marine recruiting officer wouldn't be in that day and that he might as well sign up for the Navy. Sterling said that he wasn't at all interested in joining the Navy, that he would wait until the Marine recruiting officer arrived. The Navy officer continued to give Sterling a hard time about not wanting to join the Navy. Eventually Sterling agreed to enlist with the Navy if the Marine officer failed to show up that day.

Sterling waited all day for the Marine officer to arrive. He even skipped lunch to make sure that he would not accidentally miss him. At around 3:45pm the Navy officer asked Sterling if he would keep to his word: "At that time I had never even seen a sailor or a ship. But anyhow about a quarter of four he came up to me and asked if I'd be good to my word. I said yep." It was only after he had signed his enlistment paperwork that he learned that the Navy and Marine recruiters were the same person. It just so happened that the officer's job that day was to fill his quota for recruits for the Navy. Sterling was sworn in and passed his physical that same day.

The Navy needed to obtain Sterling's parents' signatures to finalize the enlistment process given that he was still only 17. The Navy would only travel to obtain these signatures on Sundays. However, Sunday was the day that the family typically spent visiting friends and relatives. The Navy visited the farm twice without success. On the Sunday before Christmas the officers finally ran into his parents in Ono and collected their signatures that were necessary for the completion of Sterling's enlistment paperwork.

Sterling had quit the shoe factory two weeks before Christmas. During those last few weeks he continued to help out on the farm. For Christmas Sterling received his first long-pants suit. Up until that day, he had always worn knickers for special occasions.

On December 27<sup>th</sup> Sterling's parents and sister Marlene accompanied him to the Harrisburg Train Station. As a recruit, Sterling was only permitted to take only minimal personal belongings and only enough money to pay for his first month's insurance. Prior to his departure he had to empty his wallet of all but six dollars.

Sterling departed on an empty reserve train and arrived in Philadelphia mid-morning. He reported to a Merchant Marines Base and from there he was bused to the Philadelphia Naval Recruiting Station. Sterling spent the next two days waiting for orders to report to boot camp. During his brief stay in Philadelphia he was sworn in for the second time and was given a second physical. Sterling will never forget the second physical. All the recruits were told to stand in a big circle and to strip. Then the nurses and doctors made the rounds. At the end of his second day in Philadelphia Sterling boarded a train bound for Newport, RI.

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<sup>5</sup> The family owned the Copenhaver Nursery, which at that time was located on Carlisle Pike.

<sup>6</sup> It is approximately 20 miles driving distance from Grantville to Harrisburg.



## Boot Camp

Sterling reported to the Newport Naval Training Station (NTS) on December 30<sup>th</sup>. He was assigned to Company 4, the fourth company to enter the newly established training facility on Coasters Harbor Island. The remainder of the base was undergoing heavy construction and build-up in preparation for the many recruits that would pass through boot camp in the coming months and years.

Boot camp lasted three weeks, the minimum length of time for quarantine. Company 4 spent each day drilling (i.e., marching). The recruits' few moments of rest each day were spent in the barracks, the mess hall, or the infirmary. Chow was served in metal Quonset huts. Evenings were spent in wooden barracks. What little 'free time' that Sterling had was spent preparing for the next day's routine, polishing his boots, tidying up his few belongings, and learning to live out of a sea bag. Although the barracks were close quarters, Sterling made very few acquaintances. That's not to say that he kept to himself. In one case he nearly got into a fight when he exchanged some words regarding the quality of the chow with a recruit from New York City. On another occasion he made the mistake of making a smart remark to a Chief:

With my big mouth I could even get in trouble in boot camp. One day while we were in formation the Chief Petty Officer in charge of our company made a remark to one of the guys ahead of me who couldn't keep in-step, "If I had a bucket of crud I would throw it in your face." So I said "Well you probably couldn't hit anyone anyhow." Of course I was back further in the ranks and didn't think he would hear me, or he wouldn't know who had said it. But he marched back, took my watch cap off. Now remember, this is in January, it is cold, and it is snowing and sleeting. Well, he stuck it in my mouth and he made me march and stand for two hours with a wool watch cap in my mouth. Now you want something stuck in your mouth, I can tell you it isn't a wool watch cap. Just try it sometime, if only for a few minutes, and see what happens.

The day we graduated I asked him "How did you know that I was the one who made the wisecrack at you that day." He said "I didn't, but I figured that you could take it as much as anyone else, so I gave it to you."

Everyone that I ever knew who went through boot camp always had one or two guys that they would pick on, whether they deserved it or not, because they thought, and some could and some couldn't cut it. I guess I was that guy that day. Honestly, out of the entire experience of boot camp, the hardest part for me was learning to live out of a sea bag and sleeping in a hammock.

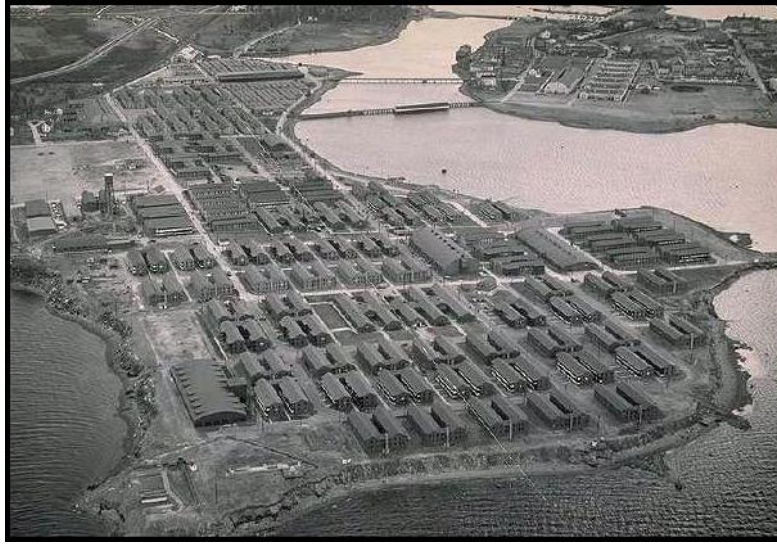
The formal training that Sterling received while at boot camp was limited to how to properly roll his uniforms and his few possessions in his hammock and sea bag. Surprisingly, Sterling did not receive training on the use of firearms. In fact, his only encounter with a firearm during boot camp was when he had his picture taken at graduation.

Upon graduation Sterling had earned the rate<sup>7</sup> of Apprentice Seaman. Although his monthly pay was twenty-one dollars, Sterling would not receive his first pay until early February. He departed with an empty wallet after paying his insurance bill using the six dollars he was allowed to carry with him to boot camp. His possessions were limited to what would fit in his sea bag, which contained his hammock, a set of basic dress and undress uniforms, and his working clothes, called dungarees.

The men of the Company 4 were transferred to an armory in Boston. There they were separated into groups for direct transfer to ship, additional training, or other assignments. Sterling was assigned to the USS *Harry Lee*. Fifteen other men from the Newport NTS 4<sup>th</sup> Company were also assigned to the *Harry Lee*. One of the recruits with whom Sterling had gone through boot camp had spent a previous stint in the Navy Reserves. He had heard that the *Harry Lee* was a destroyer. The men assigned to the *Harry Lee* were excited and they were looking forward to serving on a Destroyer.

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<sup>7</sup> Refer to the Rates & Ratings section of Appendix A for a full explanation of the Navy's pay grade system and occupational grouping system for enlisted personnel.



Coasters Harbor Island (upper right-hand corner of photograph), Newport Naval Training Station, circa early 1940's.<sup>8</sup>



Sterling's Boot Camp Graduation Photograph.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Joao Santos, Pre WWII-Training and First Assignments <<http://www.angelfire.com/va2/worldwar2family/johnsantos1.html>>

<sup>9</sup> From Sterling Funck's personal photograph collection.

## The Amphibious Navy

Sterling remembers his first sight of the *Harry Lee*. It was clearly not a Destroyer. Instead, it was a severely rusted passenger ship in need of much work. However, looks were deceiving. Sterling quickly learned that he was aboard one of the most active and exciting classes of ships in the Navy. The Attack Transport class of ships, and the crews that manned these ships, would be a key element in the Navy's amphibious program.

The *Harry Lee* represented, in some respects, the state of the U.S. Navy's amphibious program at the beginning of the war. In early 1942 the Navy was working diligently to organize an amphibious program that would meet the demands that would be placed on it for offensive action in the African, European, and Pacific theatres. The Navy was short of properly equipped amphibious ships, trained crews, and skilled boat coxswains. Fortunately, groundwork for a robust and capable amphibious program had taken place in the years prior to the start of the war.

The origins of the US Navy's wartime amphibious program actually began to take shape in the Nineteen Thirties. The Marines, whose specialty at that time was to conduct amphibious landings, experimented with amphibious techniques in conjunction with the Navy.<sup>10</sup> In 1934 the Marines and the Navy issued the Tentative Landing Operations Manual. This manual outlined the organization and doctrine for amphibious warfare<sup>11</sup> and it served as the basis for amphibious strategy and tactics for the entire course of World War II.<sup>12</sup> It provided a framework that proved to be scalable as well as flexible to accommodate improvements based on wartime experience.

Formal organization of the Navy's amphibious program took place in March of 1942 with the formation of the Amphibious Force Atlantic Fleet (AFAF). The AFAF was originally under command of the Marines. In April 1942 the Navy assumed command.<sup>13</sup> Headquarters was initially located at the Naval Operating Base in Norfolk Virginia.<sup>14</sup> Then in early September 1942 AFAF headquarters was moved to the Nansmond Hotel in Ocean View Virginia, located a few miles north of Norfolk.

The AFAF faced formidable challenges. First, ships and supplies were in short supply. Second, there were very few trained officers and sailors who understood the tactical details of how to prepare for, and execute, amphibious operations. Third, large-scale amphibious training programs had not yet been developed.

A critical element of the program was the availability of a properly equipped fleet of transports. The Navy needed a large number of transport and cargo vessels. However, in early 1942 there very few commissioned naval ships available to fill the role as amphibious troop transports and cargo vessels. The Navy took action and acquired a number of passenger ships and freighters as a stopgap to alleviate shortage while new transport-purposed ships were being built. These civilian ships were converted to transports, AP hull<sup>15</sup> designation, or cargo vessels, AK hull designation.<sup>16</sup>

The *Harry Lee*, a transport, was one such ship. It had been built in 1931 and had served as the passenger ship *Exochorda*.<sup>17</sup> In the fall of 1941 the Navy acquired the *Harry Lee* and converted it to fulfill a role as a Transport.<sup>18</sup> In late December the ship was designated AP-17 and was renamed *Harry Lee*.<sup>19</sup> Conversion from commercial service to wartime role was a major effort. The ships had to be properly outfitted to accommodate their intended function as transports. In addition to a full crew each transport needed the capacity to embark a fully equipped battalion of troops (i.e., 1200 to 1400 soldiers) along with supplies and equipment. Another key task was to alter and outfit the ship to support combat loading. Although combat loading required some reduction in cargo storage efficiency, there was considerable improvement of assault capabilities.<sup>20</sup> Morison explains:<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Samuel E. Morison, History of U.S. Naval Operations in WWII. Vol 2: Operations in North African Waters (Edison: Castle Books, 2001) 19.

<sup>11</sup> Morison, 20.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Morison, 21

<sup>14</sup> Morison, 22

<sup>15</sup> Hull: Outer shell or main body of a vessel or craft.

<sup>16</sup> Department of the Navy, Naval Historical Center, Online Library of Selected Images: U.S. NAVY SHIPS -- Listed by Hull Number APA/LPA -- Attack Transports <<http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/shusn-no/apa-no.htm>>

<sup>17</sup> Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships Online: <http://www.hazegray.org/danfs/auxil/ap17.htm>

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

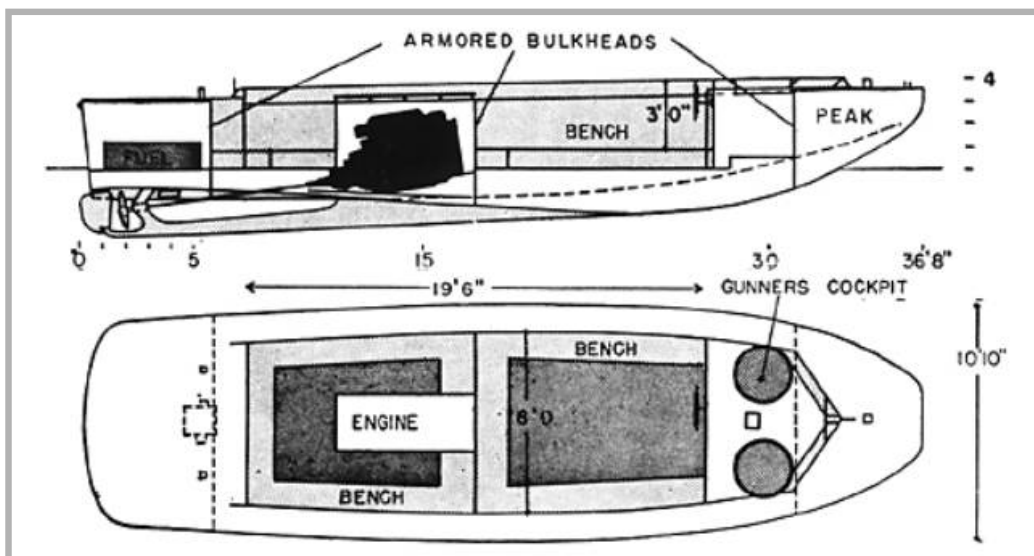
<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Amphibious Operations History <<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/systems/ship/amphib-hist.htm>>

In ordinary transport loading as much cargo and as many troops as the ship will carry are placed on board in the expectation of disembarking on a friendly dock or shore where everything can be sorted out. Combat loading, to facilitate an immediate assault on a hostile shore, is a very different and highly complicated art. The principal of it is this: essential equipment, vehicles, and supplies must be loaded in the same ship with the assault troops that are to use them, and stowed in such a manner that all may be unloaded in the order that it is likely to be wanted to meet tactical situations immediately upon landing.

Other changes were also necessary. Transports had the job of disembarking troops, supplies, and equipment using the ships' own landing craft. Boat davits<sup>22</sup> were installed for handling the landing craft.<sup>23</sup> Other alterations included reducing the amount of flammable materials within the ship, addition of basic armament, and so on. The transports also had to be equipped to evacuate and care for troops, casualties, and prisoners of war.

The Navy required a way to effectively transport troops and equipment from the transports to the beaches. This capability was formally known as Ship to Shore movement, which in concept utilized small boats to carrying men and equipment to the landing areas. To realize effective ship to shore capabilities the Navy required landing craft that were capable of transporting men and materials to the shoreline while also withstanding the abuse of obstacles, rough surf, rough beaches, and the engagement of enemy fire. Prior to 1941 there were limited options for fulfilling these requirements. Then in 1941 the Higgins "Eureka" landing craft was introduced and it was accepted by the Navy as the standard craft for troop and equipment transport.



Landing Craft, Personnel (LCP)<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Morison, 26-27

<sup>22</sup> Davit: A vertical, rotating support on a ship which supports a boat and which serves as a crane to raise and lower the boat.

<sup>23</sup> <<http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/shusn-no/apa-no.htm>>

<sup>24</sup> <<http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USN/ships/ships-lcpl.html>>

Officially designated Landing Craft, Personnel (LCP), the Eureka boat was a shallow-draft<sup>25</sup> craft capable of transporting 36 fully equipped troops, or up to 8,100 pounds of cargo.<sup>26</sup> When fully loaded it had a draft of only 3'6" that allowed it to operate in very shallow water. Most LCPs were powered by a diesel engine, although there were a few that were run with gasoline engines.<sup>27</sup> Diesel was preferred for craft engaged in action given that it was less susceptible to detonation compared to gasoline. When fully loaded the LCP could cruise at 10 knots<sup>28</sup> at full throttle.<sup>29</sup>

Considering that the LCP was constructed primarily of plywood it was a rugged craft. With a solid block of pine at the bow<sup>30</sup> it had considerable bow strength. The craft could move at flank speed<sup>31</sup> over obstacles with little or no damage.<sup>32</sup> The least favorable design element was the method for debarkation. Troops, often times heavily equipped, had to jump over the side of the craft. This method slowed debarkation, which exposed the troops, the craft, and the boat crew a greater chance of receiving enemy fire. The troops also ran a greater risk dropping into water over their heads. The coxswain, who conned the craft from the center near the bow, in front of the troop area, was exposed as well.

The Landing Craft Personnel Ramp (LCPR) was introduced in late 1942. Retrofitted with a bow ramp this craft afforded easier and quicker debarkation for troops and equipment.<sup>33</sup> An early model of the Landing Craft Mechanized (LCM) was also introduced around this time. The LCM was built of steel, diesel powered, 50 feet long and capable of carrying one 30-ton tank.<sup>34</sup> Larger sea-going vessels, such as the Landing Craft Tank (LCT) and Landing Ship Infantry (LSI), were also introduced. These larger vessels were capable of landing large numbers of troops and massive quantities of equipment directly onto beaches.

With the supply of properly designed landing craft under production and arriving for use by Navy the shortage of properly trained boat crews was the next challenge. The Navy did not have an adequately sized, or properly trained, supply of landing craft crews. As the war progressed, formal amphibious training programs were set up at Little Creek, Virginia, and Solomons Island, Maryland. However, in early 1942 these schools did not exist. With the war effort underway, and the need to assert force as quickly as possible in the Atlantic theatre, there was relatively little time for the Naval transport crews to train for their first operation. Whenever possible, the Navy employed personnel with some experience, such as pulling reservists who had previous ship and boat handling skills back into active duty. Sterling, along with the recruits from Company 4 that joined the *Harry Lee*, would learn nearly all of their seamanship skills directly from the more experienced crewmembers already aboard the ship.

Another challenge facing the amphibious group was that of inter-service coordination and agreement on strategy and tactics. The Navy and Marines had made considerable progress in planning and executing joint operations in the few years preceding the war, albeit primarily only in training exercises. However, the Navy and the Army were not prepared to work together in amphibious operations. Up until 1942 collaborative effort was limited to Naval escort of Army troop convoys.<sup>35</sup> Morison explains:<sup>36</sup>

... a properly conducted amphibious operation requires an organic unity rather than a temporary partnership, and neither the organization nor the traditions of the two armed services were then particularly receptive to a commingling of that nature.

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<sup>25</sup> Draft: The distance between a vessel's waterline and the lowest part, or keel. This, plus a safety factor, represents the minimum water depth in which a vessel may operate. The draft for a small, flat-bottomed boat may be only a few inches. The draft for a large sea-going vessel may be up to 40 feet.

<sup>26</sup> HyperWar: [Landing Craft Personnel \(Large\)](http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USN/ships/ships-lcpl.html) <<http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USN/ships/ships-lcpl.html>>

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Knot: The knot is a unit of speed, one nautical mile per hour. Multiply speed in knots by 1.15 to get speed in mph.

<sup>29</sup> HyperWar: [Ships of the U.S. Navy, 1940-1945, Landing Craft Personnel \(Large\) -- LCP\(L\)](http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USN/ships/ships-lcpl.html) <<http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USN/ships/ships-lcpl.html>>

<sup>30</sup> Bow: The forward end of a vessel.

<sup>31</sup> Flank Speed: The maximum possible speed of a craft or vessel.

<sup>32</sup> Interview, Sterling Funck, November 2001

<sup>33</sup> Morison, 29

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Morison, 23-24

<sup>36</sup> Morison, 26-27

The Navy and Army did not agree on the tactical implementation of the combat loading scheme for an operation. The Navy's view was that assault troops, especially if landing at night, should be very lightly equipped and slenderly supplied, leaving the big stuff to follow later. The Army's desire was to get as much as possible ashore in the assault boat waves, fearing that the follow-up convoy would be decimated by enemy submarines prior to landing the majority of equipment and supplies.

These differences would be worked out over time from lessons learned under hostile exercises in the early stages of the war.

## Learning the Ropes Aboard The USS Harry Lee

When the Company 4 seamen reported to the *Harry Lee* they were immediately lined up on deck and were split into two groups: Deck workers or Snipes. Deck workers were given jobs in the deck divisions, including assignments such as signalmen, radiomen, painters, general deck workers, etc. Snipes were assigned to the engineering divisions, including areas within the ship such as the engine room, fire room, etc.



USS *Harry Lee*<sup>37</sup>

Sterling was immediately assigned as a general deck worker in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Deck Division. Sterling spent his first few days learning basic deck work duties and standard seamanship skills. His expectation was that he would spend the majority of his time undertaking the never-ending job of painting the ship. Life aboard the *Harry Lee* was not very comfortable for most of the enlisted crew. The berthing areas were devoid of bunks, so Sterling spent what little downtime he could find in his hammock. Meals were eaten standing up. There were no tables or chairs for the enlisted crew in the mess.

On most transports there were three deck divisions, designated 1<sup>st</sup> division, 2<sup>nd</sup> division, and 3<sup>rd</sup> division. Members of the deck division were responsible for the external operations and maintenance of the ship. Select members of the deck division were also selected and assigned as boat crews for the ship's landing craft. Each deck division had a Chief Boatswain Mate who had responsibility over the division. Reporting into the Chief Boatswain Mate was the Leading Boatswain Mate.

Tom Sawyer was the Leading Boatswain Mate at the time Sterling joined the *Harry Lee*. The Leading Boatswain Mate was responsible for making up daily work orders, assigning watches<sup>38</sup> and runners, as well as assigning secondary duties to members of the division. Tom Sawyer had taken a liking to Sterling almost immediately and a few days later he assigned Sterling as Bowhook on the Captain's Gig.

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<sup>37</sup> From Sterling Funck's personal photograph collection. Date, location, and source of photograph unknown.

<sup>38</sup> Watch: A division of time on board ship. There are seven watches in a day reckoning from Midnight round through the 24 hours, five of them being of four hours each and the two others, called dog watches, of two hours each.

The Captain's Gig was the craft that the Captain<sup>39</sup> used as his personal transportation.<sup>40</sup> The Gig was an LCP outfitted with a removable hardtop cabin that extended back beyond the engine compartment. This cabin provided good protection for the Captain and the crew of the Gig when running about in poor weather. The cabin also had lace curtains, brass fittings, and windshield wipers. Inside there were removable leather cushions and a divider that could be used to keep the embarked personnel in privacy from the coxswain. The Gig was further differentiated from the other landing craft with the marking of an arrow through the hull number. Although the Gig was outfitted to accommodate the Captain, the craft was also used in action. In the first waves of an invasion the Gig was typically used to transport members of the Beach Party to the beach. It was also used for the landing of troops and equipment during the later stages of a landing operation.<sup>41</sup>

The crew of landing craft, such as an LCP, consisted of three enlisted men, the coxswain, the engineer, and the bowhook. The coxswain was in command of the craft and had ultimate responsibility for the operation and well being of the craft and the crew. The Engineer had responsibility for running and maintaining the mechanical components of the craft, such as the engine and pumps. The Bowhook was typically the lowest ranking and least skilled member of the boat crew.

At first Sterling did not know what he was to do as the Bowhook. Tom Poe, then coxswain of the Gig, kept trying to tell Sterling what to do. Sterling didn't follow as quickly as was expected of him so he was sent to training. After a few days of training he was reassigned back as Bowhook of the Gig. Although still wet behind the ears, Sterling learned the ropes under the watchful eyes of Tom Sawyer and Tom Poe.

As Bowhook Sterling had several responsibilities. Using an 8-to10 foot pole called a bow hook, given it had a hook at the end, he was responsible of helping to position the Gig as the coxswain pulled the boat in next to the ship or the dock. When either getting under way, or while hooking back up to the davit hooks, the Bowhook was responsible for the forward hook-up whereas the engineer was responsible for the aft<sup>42</sup> hook-up. He was also responsible for forward lookout when the Gig was under way. On a ramped craft, such as an LCP(R), the bowhook had an additional duty to man the bow ramp winch.

After only a few weeks Sterling was promoted to Seaman 2<sup>nd</sup> Class. At this time he received his first permanent assignment as the Captain's Orderly. As Captain's Orderly Sterling stood watch outside the Captain's stateroom waiting to announce when messages and visitors arrived. Over a twelve-hour period he typically spent half of that time standing as an Orderly, usually in intervals of two-hours, and the remaining hours helping in various deck activities. Sterling also retained his secondary duty as Bowhook on the Gig.

An additional responsibility that Sterling gained as S2C was assignment to the Damage Control Party. Members of the Damage Control Party were responsible for identifying, reporting, and repairing, as quickly as possible, the effects of any fire, explosion, or significant water leak. Within each division teams were assigned to specific sections in of the ship<sup>43</sup> and were responsible for these areas in the event of a critical situation. When General Quarters<sup>44</sup> sounded the Damage Control Party was responsible for reporting to their assigned battle stations<sup>45</sup> and taking action to contain the situation in the event that the ship took damage from attack or accident.

Sterling, as Bowhook on the Gig and as the Captain's Orderly, spent a good deal of his time in the company of the commanding officer of the *Harry Lee*, Captain J.W. Whitfield. Captain Whitfield had the reputation as a tough captain. Sterling recalls, "He could be a son-of-a-gun. But yet if he liked you, he liked you."

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<sup>39</sup> Captain: Navy usage refers to the person in command of any vessel as the "Captain", regardless of the formal rank he holds.

<sup>40</sup> The Gig was also referred to as the Captain's Barge.

<sup>41</sup> The craft was stored on the port side of the 2<sup>nd</sup> division. The cabin was lashed to the inward port bulkhead and covered with a tarp when not in use.

<sup>42</sup> Aft: At, near, or towards the stern (i.e., the rear) of a vessel or craft.

<sup>43</sup> Such as from one numbered frame member to another numbered frame member.

<sup>44</sup> General Quarters: Emergency alarm, sounded either by boatswain's whistle or bugle call, or both, and the announcement that all hands are to proceed with all haste to their battle stations.

<sup>45</sup> Battle Station: A work assignment and location essential to the safety and efficient operation of the ship in emergency, such as combat, fire, flood, or other disaster. These assignments may not have had much to do with a sailor's day-to-day job; for instance, yeomen (ship's clerks) may have been assigned to a magazine as ammunition passers.



The crew frequently referred to Captain Whitfield as 'Bulldog'. One reason for the nickname was the way he wore his hat. It was too large for his head and it rested on his ears, which made his ears stick out. His choice in hat sizes wasn't the only reason for his nickname. He was a strict disciplinarian. Sterling describes one example of Captain Whitfield's many actions that earned him the nickname bulldog:

I happen to be on the watch on the bridge<sup>46</sup> that day. Word had been passed to dump garbage and trash over the fantail<sup>47</sup>. Well the Captain thought he saw someone go down the port side<sup>48</sup> of the ship, throwing something overboard. You see, you were only allowed to toss trash off of the ship a predetermined times, right before dusk, and only from the fantail at the stern<sup>49</sup> of the ship. And then the trash had to be weighted down so that it would sink immediately.

Anyway it looked like he threw something over the side, but I have to take his word for it that it wasn't. You usually did it right after dusk, just before it was totally dark. The Captain happened to be on the port wing of the bridge, and he said to the officer of the deck, bring that man up here. So the officer of the deck ordered me, I was standing as Messenger of the Watch, to go get him.

I went down and got him and he came up on the bridge. The captain asked him why he threw that junk over the side instead of taking it to the fantail. The sailor said "I didn't throw anything over the side." The Captain said "I saw you" and the man said "No Captain, I didn't throw anything over the side." He looked at him real good, and then said "Your shirt and dungarees<sup>50</sup> are dirty. Three days bread and water." He wasn't going to be corrected even if he was wrong.

Captain Whitfield had a good reason to be so concerned about this situation in particular. There was an appointed method and time for disposing of trash. This method minimized the risk of enemy subs spotting floating debris and tracking a convoy by following a trail of trash. Captain Whitfield's attitude might have also been shaped by his experience aboard a ship docked at Pearl Harbor, on the fateful day of December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1941.

One of Sterling's first direct encounters with the Captain occurred shortly after he had rejoined the Gig's crew. The Captain ordered him to purchase a pair of sneakers to wear when in the Gig. Although his first payday had not yet arrived he was able to borrow money at the ship's store to pay for his sneakers. Sterling was glad to have the sneakers. They made for much better working shoes aboard the Gig. When his first payday did arrive, his pay quickly disappeared after paying back the money he owed for his sneakers and paying the next installment of his insurance premium.

Sterling had very little downtime given his many duties and assignments. He worked diligently to learn and hone his deck and boat skills. He also spent many hours tending to the maintenance of landing craft. Typically the only breaks from work came during his breaks between nighttime watches, which he used to catch a few hours of sleep in his hammock.

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<sup>46</sup> Bridge: The command center, located high and forward on a vessel, in which the Officer of the Deck is stationed, and from which maneuvering orders are given.

<sup>47</sup> Fantail: Stern area of the main deck.

<sup>48</sup> Port: The left-hand side of a ship, when facing forward.

<sup>49</sup> Stern: The rear end of a vessel or craft.

<sup>50</sup> Dungarees: Enlisted sailor's working uniform trousers of heavy blue cloth.

## Amphibious Training In The Chesapeake

The crew spent the early months of 1942 participating in training and maneuvers along the eastern coast of the US. Sterling recalls most of the training took place in the Chesapeake Bay, particularly the Solomons Island training area. According to one source, amphibious training exercises in early 1942 were originally to take place off the coast of North Carolina. However, maneuvers were moved to the relative safety of the Chesapeake Bay given significant U-Boat activity along the Atlantic Coast during the early months of 1942.<sup>51</sup>

Sterling spent most of his time working along side senior-rate sailors from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division such as Tom Poe, Tom Sawyer, John Zdanowicz, Chief Del Gaizo, and sailors Dougan and Potacker. Many of these men were Navy Reservists from the New England area who were called into active duty for the war. Sterling was exposed to a variety of skills by these more experienced boat crewmembers, most notably Tom Sawyer and John Zdanowicz. Both Tom and John had grown up making a living on the water and they had also been in the reserves prior to the start of the war.

Eventually Tom Poe was promoted and John Zdanowicz took over as coxswain of the Gig. Zdanowicz was a Maine lobsterman by trade. On maneuvers in the Chesapeake, they would pull up along side of oystermen to chat with them about their trade. Oftentimes John and Sterling would return to the *Harry Lee* with a basket full of fresh Oysters.

The time spent in the Chesapeake afforded the crews of the transports training on all aspects of an amphibious operation, from the preparatory stage through to actual landings. The training exercises were conducted during both the day and the night. However, emphasis was placed on nighttime training exercises. Upcoming invasions would attempt an element of surprise by hitting the beaches in the early morning hours shortly before dawn. This approach required that the boat crews be able to effectively and quietly get their boats prepared, loaded, and organized in near total darkness. The boat crews had no lights and minimal radio communication to rely on for guidance during loading and landing. The entire crew of the ship practiced using hand signals. If they were lucky they sometimes had filtered lights to assist in their tasks.

During a landing operation the first step was to lower a landing craft to the water. The boat crew rode the craft from the deck to the water to ensure that the craft was under control once it became waterborne. As the boat was lowered from the rail, the engineer readied the bilge pumps and started the engine so that as soon as the boat hit the water the bilge pumps were running to cool the engine.

Immediately upon hitting the water the bowhook unhooked the front davit hook, and the engineer unhooked the rear davit hook. The deck crew would then raise the boat cables. It was the job of the coxswain to keep the boat as close to the ship as possible, with the help of the Bow Hook, while the troops climbed down the rope nets and into the boat and any equipment assigned to the craft was lowered into the boat.

The preferred method for embarking soldiers into a landing craft was to load at the rail and then lower the boat to the water. This method minimized the risk of the embarking troops being accidentally crushed between the hull of the ship and the landing craft as swells tossed the craft about the side of the ship. It also reduced the time required to load the landing craft. While this approach was theoretically possible, practice showed that the davits and cables would not hold under the stresses of rough weather and fully loaded boats. If a boat were to drop from rail to the water it could capsize<sup>52</sup>, dumping all occupants into the ocean. Until stronger davits and cables could be outfitted on the transports, over-the-rail loading remained the standard practice. For the troops embarking the landing craft in the dark, in heavy swells, and fully equipped with combat gear, neither approach offered comfort.

Once loaded, the craft would rendezvous several miles from the landing beaches and form up into assault waves. When the control craft gave the appropriate signal, typically using flags during the day and colored lights at nights, the assault waves would head for the beach and land their troops. The craft would then return to their ship to pick up

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<sup>51</sup> John Gordon IV, "Joint Power Projection: Operation Torch", Joint Force Quarterly, Spring 1994, 63-64  
<[www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/jfq\\_pubs/optorch4.pdf](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/jfq_pubs/optorch4.pdf)>

<sup>52</sup> Capsizes: To flip upside down, and usually, to sink.

another load of personnel and equipment. Sometimes in later phases of the landing radio messages were used to communicate with the landing craft.

Sterling continued to develop skills necessary to qualify as a coxswain. These skills included learning to handle and care for the Gig. Sterling occasionally had the opportunity to pilot the Gig and develop skills when the Captain was not aboard. In late summer, during one of Sterling's boat watches, one of the boats attached to the boat boom<sup>53</sup> began to drift away from the ship. Sterling, along with an engineer, went out after it and brought it back to the ship and re-tied it to the boom. From that point forward Tom Poe would delegate piloting of the Gig to Sterling when the Captain was not aboard.

Time passed quickly. Before Sterling knew it spring had past and summer was coming to a close. By this time Sterling had earned the rate of Seaman 1<sup>st</sup> Class (SC1). In August the *Harry Lee* was moored in the Brooklyn Navy Yard undergoing upgrades and repairs. Sterling took advantage of the time to take his first leave<sup>54</sup>. He traveled to Philadelphia, via train, to visit with his mother who was hospitalized for eye surgery. He also spent a few days at home visiting with his family and friends. He returned to the Brooklyn Shipyard on August 15<sup>th</sup> and rejoined the *Harry Lee*.

The frequency and intensity of training exercises increased during the summer of 1942. In early October many among the ship's company were promoted forward one rate. Tom Poe was promoted and assigned to assist Tom Sawyer in the leadership and administration of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division. Sterling, having just earned SC1 a few months earlier, was given all of the responsibilities as Coxswain of the Gig even though he hadn't yet formally qualified as a Coxswain.



Left: Sterling visiting with Eugene and Harold Wentling, August 1942, wearing his Dress Blues.<sup>55</sup>  
Right: Sterling with Edna Wentling, August 1942, wearing his Dress Whites.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Boat Boom: The boom swung out from a ship's side when at anchor to which craft in the water secure.

<sup>54</sup> Leave: Permission to be absent from the duty station for a period longer than a few days, (or, the period of time covered by this permission).

<sup>55</sup> From Sterling Funck's personal photograph collection. Dress Blues were the typical fall/winter formal uniform.

<sup>56</sup> From Sterling Funck's personal photograph collection. Dress Whites were the typical summer formal uniform.

## Transfer to the USS Calvert

The *Harry Lee* was scheduled to depart Norfolk on October 23<sup>rd</sup> in company with more than 100 ships, including 30 other troop transports, to take part in Operation Torch, the invasion of North Africa. A few days prior to departure for the *Harry Lee* experienced a boiler malfunction while participating in training exercises near Cove Point in the Chesapeake.<sup>57</sup> This was a serious situation given that the ship was fully loaded with troops and equipment of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Armored Division. These personnel and equipment were critical elements of the Western Task Force's planned assault on North Africa.

The *Harry Lee* was towed back to Norfolk and docked opposite to a newly constructed and commissioned<sup>58</sup> transport the USS *Calvert*, designated AP-65. Task force command decided to transfer the troops, cargo, and equipment to the *Calvert* and send the new ship into action.<sup>59</sup> Nearly half of the *Harry Lee*'s crew was transferred to the *Calvert* to augment the crew with more experienced and trained personnel. Sterling went along over to the *Calvert* with the rest of the *Harry Lee*'s boat crews. Guys that Sterling had served with to date, such as Sawyer, Zdanowicz, Del Gaizo, Dougan, and Pottacker, were transferred to the *Calvert* at that time. Tom Poe, one of Sterling's mentors, remained with the *Harry Lee*. Captain Whitfield, and a number of his officers, also transferred to the new ship. Abe Weinberg, one of the original crewmembers of the *Calvert*, remembers the arrival of Captain Whitfield just prior to the start of transfer of equipment from the *Harry Lee*: "When Capt. Whitfield first came aboard his first words were 'All liberty<sup>60</sup> is cancelled'."<sup>61</sup>



USS *Calvert*.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> [History of U.S.S. Calvert](#), 1

<sup>58</sup> Commissioning: The commissioning ceremony marks the acceptance of a ship as a unit of the operating forces of the United States Navy. Thereafter the ship is officially referred to as a United States Ship (USS).

<sup>59</sup> [History of U.S.S. Calvert](#), 1

<sup>60</sup> Liberty: Permission to leave the ship or station; off-duty time, of no more than 24 hours or a weekend.

<sup>61</sup> [Calversion](#), Volume 44, 2, Information provided by Abe Brian Weinberg

<sup>62</sup> From Sterling Funck's personal photograph collection. Original source, location and date of photograph unknown.

Over the course of the next twenty-four hours Sterling participated in the massive effort of transferring troops, combat equipment, and cargo to the *Calvert*.<sup>63</sup> Eighteen of the *Harry Lee*'s landing craft, including the *Gig*, were also transferred to the *Calvert*.<sup>64</sup> The crews of the two ships were responsible for transferring the *Harry Lee*'s supplies and the troops' equipment to the *Calvert*. The troops themselves were responsible for transferring their ammunition. One of Sterling's specific duties was to help rig the *Harry Lee*'s 'yard and stay', which was used to transfer equipment from the *Harry Lee*'s holds to the dock where it was picked back up and then placed in the *Calvert*'s holds. Progress was slowed however, as the rigging<sup>65</sup> had not yet been run completely on the *Calvert*.

Sterling remained part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division and a member of the *Gig*'s crew. One change for him was his transfer out of the Damage Control Party and into the aft 3-inch gun crew. The 3-inch 50-caliber gun was primarily a defensive weapon. It could be used against aircraft and for work against light surface craft and surfaced submarines. The gun crew was made up of approximately seven or eight sailors. The members of the gun crew consisted of a pointer, a trainer, a sight setter, a first loader, two or three secondary loaders, a hot shell man, and the gun captain. A well-trained gun crew could fire 45 rounds per minute.<sup>66</sup> Sterling was assigned as the pointer. As the pointer he was responsible for the horizontal orientation of the gun as well as firing the gun. His trainer was responsible for the vertical orientation of the gun barrel.

The *Calvert* had some significant distance to make to catch up with the convoy, having spent nearly a day and a half completing the transfer of men and materials. The ship departed Norfolk on October 25<sup>th</sup> running at flank speed in an effort to catch up with the convoy. An escort of two destroyers, the USS *Eberle* (DD-430) and USS *Boyle* (DD-600), accompanied the *Calvert* in her race across the Atlantic.

Although the *Calvert* was underway, a tremendous amount of work was necessary to make the ship combat ready and to make it as safe as possible. The deck crews worked diligently. The first major effort was to paint the ship to protect it from the elements at sea. Sterling kept busy helping to paint the ship through most of the voyage. He also spent a great deal of his time readying the landing craft in the 2<sup>nd</sup> division. The landing craft brought over from the *Harry Lee* had their designations re-painted to match the *Calvert*. Sterling spent some of his time re-painting numbers on the landing craft cradled in the 2<sup>nd</sup> division.

The *Calvert* had capacity for approximately thirty LCPs/LCPRs, and two or three LCMs. Nearly half of the LCPs/LCPRs were stored in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division. . The remaining craft, including the LCMs, were split between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Divisions. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Division had two boat davits on either side of the ship. Each davit could hold three landing craft. Boats were also cradled on the deck. According to Sterling a well trained, experienced, and coordinated deck crew could disembark three landing craft to the water in a space of fifteen minutes, or less, given favorable weather and sea conditions. Sterling recalls that Tom Sawyer was one of the best winch runners he ever worked with during his time in the service.

Other work also kept the crew busy. Countless hours were spent removing flammable materials that posed a fire hazard. Much of the material removed from within the ship remained on-deck until the appointed time to dump trash overboard. Another safety concern addressed was the placement of gun stops on the appropriate armament. If so inclined, the gun crews could have positioned their guns to fire point blank into the ship. Precautions were necessary to minimize the risk of unintended or accidental mishaps in the heat of battle.

With a very short shakedown period prior to joining the invasion force the *Calvert* was bound to have problems during her first ocean-going voyage. Prior to catching up with the convoy the *Calvert* experienced a breakdown. Apparently, the situation was due to human error when a water tank was mistakenly switched over as an oil tank.<sup>67</sup> For several hours the *Calvert* lay dead in the water while repairs were made. The *Eberle* and *Boyle* circled round watchful for U-boats.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> History of U.S.S. Calvert, 1; Duration is disputed across sources. John Lorelli, in To Foreign Shores, states that loading took 48 hours. Sterling believes that it took somewhere between 24 and 36 hours to complete the transfer.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> Rigging: General term for all ropes and cables of a vessel.

<sup>66</sup> USS Texas BB35, 3" Naval Gun <[http://www.usstexasbb35.com/3\\_naval\\_gun.htm](http://www.usstexasbb35.com/3_naval_gun.htm)>

<sup>67</sup> Calversion, Volume 43, 2, Information provided by Lawrence C. Wagner

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

The *Calvert* had several amenities that made life somewhat easier on the crew. Sterling finally had a bunk and he happily folded up his hammock and used it as extra padding under his mattress. The boat crews and deck crews enjoyed electrically driven davits, versus the manual davits that the crew had manned on the *Harry Lee*. These davits made handling boats a much quicker and easier job.

Troop accommodations weren't much different than they had been aboard the *Harry Lee*. With nearly 1200 troops onboard, quarters were close. Berthing quarters were tight and very uncomfortable. The mess hall was similar in function as it was on the *Harry Lee*, which was simply a place to pick up food, so the crew and troops continued to eat their chow standing up. As was the case on most transports, much of the time below deck was spent playing cards in between constant drills, standing in line for meals, and calisthenics. Evening hours were tedious as cigarettes weren't allowed: "While zigzagging across the Atlantic ... the ship was darkened every night and the "Smoking lamp was out."<sup>69</sup> When a ship was underway blackout began at sunset and continued until sunrise. During this time smoking was not permitted on any of the decks and all sources of lights had to be extinguished or filtered. Even the glow from the tip of a lighted cigarette is visible for from 5000 to 6000 yards at sea on a dark night<sup>70</sup>.

Sterling's worst fears on his first trans-Atlantic voyage were the threat of attack from U-boats and the outbreak of fire on the ship. The *Calvert* encountered both situations in one day. As the convoy continued east toward the coast of North Africa the *Calvert's* watch spotted a submarine periscope. The Destroyers immediately began depth charging the suspected enemy sub. Sterling joined in the action and fired at the submarine as part of the *Calvert's* aft 3" gun crew. A heap of trash on the *Calvert's* fantail caught on fire from the gun's blast. The fire was quickly extinguished and the sub was not spotted again. However, the crew was on edge for quite some time following these events.

The *Calvert* and her escorts caught up with the Western Task Force convoy in the mid-Atlantic on October 30<sup>th</sup>. Recorded in the War Diary of the USS *Augusta*: "The USS *Calvert*, *Eberle*, and *Boyle* joined the formation during the morning and took their assigned stations. Position at 0800 Lat 38-30N, Long 46-18.5W; Position at 1200 Lat 38-01N, Long 45-30W; Position at 2000 Lat 37-13N, Long 43-42 W."<sup>71</sup>

The *Augusta* was the flagship for the task force. Rear Admiral H.K. Hewitt, commander of the Western Naval Task Force, and Major General George Patton, commander of the U.S. Army forces for the troops embarked on the ships of the Western Task Force, were both aboard the *Augusta*.<sup>72</sup>

The convoy had to bear the brunt of severe weather and heavy seas for the latter half of the four thousand mile voyage. The roll was so bad that the captain of the *Charles Carroll*, a transport assigned to the Center Attack Group, made the comment "I can't believe a ship can roll so far without turning over."<sup>73</sup> The weather situation, with surf pounding the Moroccan coast with eighteen-foot breakers, threatened the entire operation. Even with the passing of the gale a few days prior to scheduled landings, the forecast for landing conditions from the War Department were "Very Poor".<sup>74</sup> Delaying the landings meant the risk of running short on fuel the ever-growing risk that the enemy would discover the fleet at sea.<sup>75</sup> Admiral Hewitt was committed to the assault. The convoy "forged ahead at fourteen knots, zigzagging by day and steaming direct courses<sup>76</sup> at night."<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Calversion, Volume 44, 2, Information provided by Abe Brian Weinberg

<sup>70</sup> Life Aboard A Transport. Troop Training Unit, Amphibious Command, Pacific Fleet, Camp Elliot, San Diego. January 5, 1944

<sup>71</sup> War Diary, *USS Augusta*, 11/7/1942 <<http://www.internet-esq.com/ussaugusta/diary/1142.htm>>

<sup>72</sup> Gordon, John IV, "Joint Power Projection: Operation Torch", Joint Force Quarterly, Spring 1994, 64  
<[www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/jfq\\_pubs/optorch4.pdf](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/jfq_pubs/optorch4.pdf)>

<sup>73</sup> Rick Atkinson, An Army At Dawn: The War in North Africa, 1942-1943 (Henry Holt and Company, 2002) 103

<sup>74</sup> Atkinson, 104

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> Course: The direction in which, generally expressed in (true) degrees, a vessel is proceeding.

<sup>77</sup> Morison, 45

## Operation Torch: North Africa

The *Calvert* was assigned to the Southern Attack Group of the Western Naval Task Force for the invasion of North Africa. The mission of Operation Torch was as follows:<sup>78</sup>

1. The establishment of firm and mutually supported footholds between Oran and Tunisia on the Mediterranean, and in French Morocco on the Atlantic, in order to secure bases for continued and intensified air, ground, and sea operations.
2. Exploitation of the footholds in order to acquire complete control of French Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia and extend offensive operations against the rear of the Axis forces eastward.
3. Destroy the Axis forces now opposing the British forces in the Western Desert and establish bases for the intensification of air and sea operations against the Axis in the European continent.

Operation Torch was “in many ways a watershed event for both the Army and the Navy”<sup>79</sup> given the limited experience by both parties with such a large amphibious operation.<sup>80</sup> Sterling was about to participate in the largest amphibious operation up to that time.

Luck was with the task force. In the early hours of November 7<sup>th</sup> newly received forecasts predicted improvement in the weather and surf conditions for a short window of time during the scheduled landings.<sup>81</sup> After nearly 4500 miles and 16 days at sea the Southern Attack Group broke off of the main convoy at dawn on November 7<sup>th</sup>. As recorded in the Augusta’s War Diary: “Steaming toward the midnight assault positions. At 0700 the Northern Group was released and at 1400 the Southern Group departed. Position at 0800 – Latitude 34 – 36.5 N Longitude 09 – 49 W; Position at 1200 – Latitude 34 – 45 N Longitude 08 – 51.5 W.”<sup>82</sup>

After splitting from the main group, the Southern Attack Group headed south towards Safi, French Morocco. The Southern Attack Group, comprised of twenty-six ships, was to land in-and-around Safi, French Morocco with over 6,400 troops of the 47<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, and elements of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Armored Division.<sup>83</sup>

### D-Day North Africa

At 2345 on Saturday, November 7<sup>th</sup> the Southern Attack Force reached Safi where they anchored eight miles east of the landing beaches.<sup>84</sup> They found “smooth seas, moderate swell, and a light offshore breeze.”<sup>85</sup> However, tensions were high. The commanding officers were not sure of how well prepared, or aware, the Axis forces were of the impending assault.

Preparations for the pre-dawn landing began immediately. The boat crews readied their boats. The soldiers prepared their equipment, and as best they could themselves, for the upcoming landing. The gun crews manned their guns, ready at a moments notice to defend against enemy attack.

Sterling’s first assignment was to man the aft 3-inch gun. At the same time the *Calvert*’s boat crews embarked in their boats and were lowered to the water. Then soldiers of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Armored Division disembarked the *Calvert* via nets and climbed down into landing craft waiting below. From there they were transferred to the *Titania* where they were joined with their armored vehicles. During the transfer of soldiers to the *Titania* another member of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division deck crew took Sterling’s place in the Gig.

There were plenty of challenges. The heavy swells hindered the handling and loading of the landing craft. The rough conditions slowed troop and equipment loading. Morison explains the situation:<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Morison, 138

<sup>79</sup> Gordon, 62

<sup>80</sup> Gordon, 67

<sup>81</sup> Atkinson, 105

<sup>82</sup> <<http://www.internet-esq.com/ussaugusta/diary/1142.htm>>

<sup>83</sup> Gordon, 63

<sup>84</sup> Morison, 139

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Morison, 143

There was quite a roll on, and the soldiers with 60 pounds of equipment hated to go over the rail and down the net ladders until the fellow ahead was safely in the boat. It took some boats a full hour to load 36 men and their equipment at the transport's side. Consequently, H-hour, the time for the rush of landing boats from the departure line, had to be postponed from 0400 to 0430.

Sterling had a good view of the challenges the boat crews were facing in the "smooth seas" from his vantage point on deck manning the aft gun. A short distance away equipment was being off-loaded from the *Dix*. As a jeep was being lowered into an LCT it hit the side of the ship and one of its gas tanks burst into flames. The *Dix* was so close that Sterling could read the numbers painted on the side of the vehicle in the light of the fire.

By 0200 the soldiers who had been aboard the *Calvert* were joined with their vehicles from the *Titania*. The *Calvert's* boat crews then headed to the *Harris* and *Dix* for loading. Once each craft had received its allotted personnel it broke away from transport staging area and circled with other loaded craft organizing into assault waves to await the signal to cross the line of departure to head to the beaches. Sterling was relieved of the 3-inch gun at 0400 and he joined the crew in the Gig. Embarked in the Gig were members of the beach party.

The *Calvert's* boats, loaded with soldiers and equipment of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Armored Division, were assigned to land at Yellow Beach. Yellow Beach was located approximately seven miles south of Safi. With the delay in H-hour the officers in charge decided to post-pone landings at Yellow Beach. The crews and troops aboard the landing craft awaited orders to land.

In the pre-dawn light, while the Gig was circling near the line of departure, Sterling spotted what he thought was a periscope. At first the rest of the Gig's crew disagreed and suggested that the object was piece of floating debris. However, upon circling the object for closer inspection, the consensus was that it was a periscope. The landing officer would not break radio silence to report the sighting. He did, however, give crew the order to attempt to track the sub. The sub wasn't spotted again and there were no ships torpedoed in the vicinity of Safi.

The USS *Joseph Hewes* (AP-50) was torpedoed by a U-Boat while it was supporting landings farther north near Fedhala. Aboard the *Hewes* was a guy by the name of Gilgallan,<sup>87</sup> who was rescued and was reassigned to the *Calvert* a few months later. The harrowing stories told by Gilgallan still ring strong in Sterling's memories.

Meanwhile, the landings had commenced at Safi. Resistance was light, landings went well, and Safi was taken by mid-day.<sup>88</sup> The surf at Yellow Beach remained rough and there appeared to be little value in landing at Yellow Beach given the success at Safi. The *Calvert's* boats returned to the transport staging area and were ordered to land at Safi. Following their initial landings at Safi the boat crews began the task of transporting supplies and equipment to shore.<sup>89</sup> A few of the *Calvert's* landing crews were harassed by enemy sniper fire throughout the late morning hours. Even with the sniper fire Sterling was exposed to very little enemy action during his landings. He eventually returned to the *Calvert* and rejoined the 3-inch gun crew.

The *Calvert* remained off of the coast of Morocco for nearly a week. The crew spent this time transferring equipment to the docks at Safi. On the 14<sup>th</sup> the *Calvert* departed North Africa and sailed west towards Norfolk.<sup>90</sup> Captain Whitfield further reinforced his reputation with the crew on the return voyage: "en-route Captain Whitfield ordered a seaman who was wearing army shoes to dump overboard all the souvenirs he bought in Safi. Everyone remembers Capt. Whitfield as a real sweet heart."<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> This spelling could be wrong.

<sup>88</sup> Gordon, 65

<sup>89</sup> History of U.S.S. Calvert, 1

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> Calversion, Volume 44, 2, Information provided by Abe Brian Weinberg



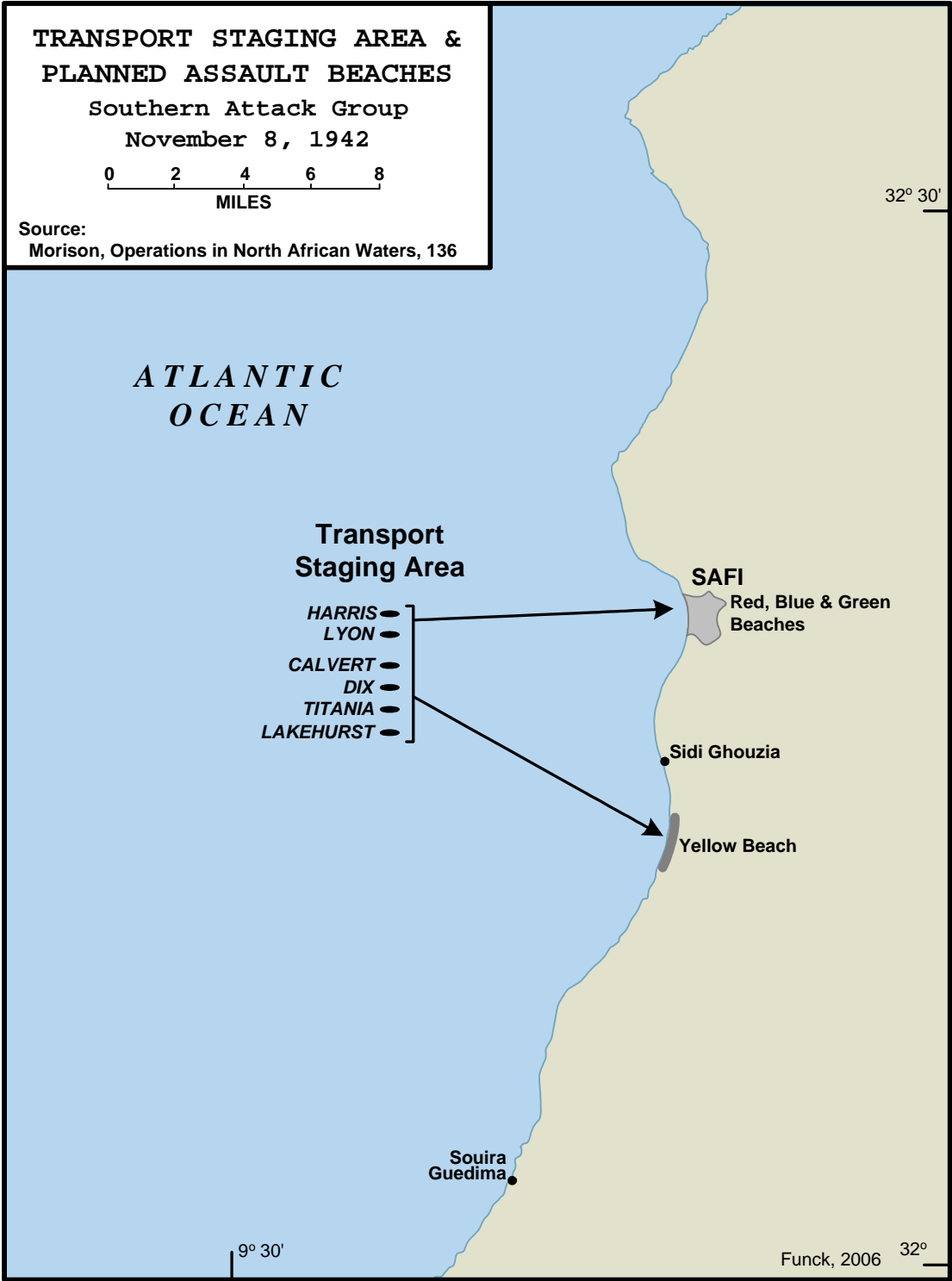


Photo # 80-G-31424 Invasion shipping off Safi, Morocco, 10 November 1942



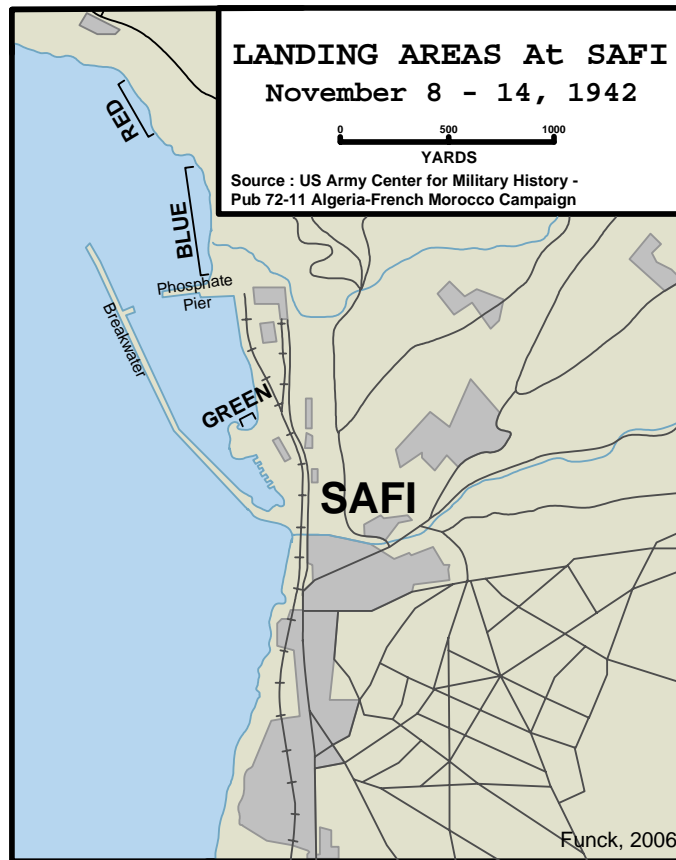
U.S. Navy ships off the Phosphate Pier at Safi, Morocco, on 10 November 1942. Beach “Red” is in the left background. Beach “Blue” is in the left center, with the harbor in the center and the town of Safi at right. Ships present are (from left to right center): USS *Dorothea L. Dix* (AP-67), USS *Calvert* (AP-65), USS *Harris* (AP-8), USS *Lyon* (AP-71) and USS *Housatonic* (AO-35).<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Department of the Navy, Naval Historical Center, [Online Library of Selected Images: U.S. NAVY SHIPS -- USS Dorothea L. Dix \(AP-67\), 1942-1946](http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/sh-usn/usnsh-d/ap67.htm) <<http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/sh-usn/usnsh-d/ap67.htm>>



Safi harbor<sup>93</sup>



<sup>93</sup> From Sterling Funck's personal photograph collection. Photograph taken from the deck of the USS Calvert.

## Chesapeake Bay

The *Calvert* arrived in Norfolk on November 24<sup>th</sup>.<sup>94</sup> Shortly after arriving back in the States many of the *Calvert's* crewman were promoted one rate forward. Sterling was also promoted, earning the rate of Boatswain Mate 3<sup>rd</sup> Class (BM3C). A short time later he passed the written exam to qualify as a Coxswain. Sterling's primary duties shifted to pilot and maintain the Gig. His responsibilities included tasks necessary to keep the craft ready for action. This work included tidying up after maneuvers, waterproofing, tending to life rafts and survival gear/kits, among other activities necessary to keep the boat ready for the transport of troops and equipment during training operations and invasions.

Sterling had acquired an array of seamanship skills. These skills included the semaphore<sup>95</sup> flag signaling system, Morse code, standard rigging, rigging for mine sweeping<sup>96</sup>, among many others. Navigational skills were also important, and by now Sterling was able to navigate by compass, sexton, and at night by reading the stars. Surprisingly Sterling did not receive formal training, he learned all of these skills while he was on the job.

Sterling's secondary duty changed from Captain's Orderly to Messenger of the Watch. During his assigned watches he stood on the starboard<sup>97</sup> wing of the bridge while underway, and on the Quarterdeck while in port, delivering messages and carrying out orders as directed from the Boatswain Mate of the Watch. Sterling also began to transition into a leadership role in the 2<sup>nd</sup> division. His duties included supervising deck work and teaching less experienced sailors skills such as cable splicing and how to run rigging in a correct and safe manner.

As a member of the Captain's Gig, Sterling also enjoyed certain privileges that were not available to members of other boat crews. For example, while the Captain was away from the ship the crew of the Gig only had to report to the ship during muster calls each morning at 0800. This basically gave the Gig's crew periods of up to twenty-four hours leave each day the Captain was away from the ship.

Serving on the Gig did have other advantages. The Captain had a daughter who was close to Sterling's age. The Captain's wife and daughter would often stay at the Hotel Chamberlain when the *Calvert* was participating in exercises in the Solomons area. Not liking the idea of a service man dating his daughter, Captain Whitfield made it clear to everyone, including Sterling, that he would not allow a Navy man to date his daughter:

Captain Whitfield had a favorite saying whenever someone was assigned to his crew. He had a wife and a daughter. You met most captains' wives when you would take the captains ashore in the Gig. Well, he always said that if he ever caught anyone trying to date his daughter that would be the end of his career. Well that just made this Dutchman bound and determined to date his daughter. And I did. I got to be very good friends with both his wife and his daughter. He did find out about it and he gave me a little hard time about it when I would run him to shore or take him to different meetings. But he never came down with the repercussions that he said he would.

However, serving on the Gig did have its disadvantages. First, there was the endless task of tending after the Gig to keep it in tip-top condition to the Captain's liking. Cleaning, polishing, tending the Gig for hours day after day could be tedious and very boring. Second, ship's company gave the crew of the Gig a hard time:

Well, serving in the Captain's Gig you oft times had privileges that other shipmates didn't have. But also you had repercussions due to the fact that you were considered primadonna, or somehow a little better than everyone else for chauffeuring the Captain around whenever he needed it. Now his barge was always converted to be involved in the landings on invasions. But as far as being shipboard, there was oft-times a lot of petty nitpicking because of the position you were either lucky, or unlucky enough, to be put in. There was a lot of slang and carrying on against the Gig's

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<sup>94</sup> History of U.S.S. Calvert, 1

<sup>95</sup> Semaphore: A visual system for sending information by means of two flags that are held one in each hand, using an alphabetic code based on the position of the signaler's arms.

<sup>96</sup> When the *Calvert* was traveling alone it would rig for sweeping. The 1<sup>st</sup> Division deck crews had the job of setting up rigging and mine demolition if a mine was encountered.

<sup>97</sup> Starboard: The right-hand side of a boat or a ship, when facing forward.

crew. Most times you were just called 'boats' but I got my fair share of 'brow noser'. Of course guys who knew me well oft-times just called me 'Funky'.

In mid-December Sterling took leave to visit his family. He returned to the *Calvert* just before Christmas. Shortly thereafter Captain Whitfield was reassigned as Commanding Officer at Little Creek Virginia to head up the Amphibious Training Base. Captain A.P. Mullenix, USN, replaced Captain Whitfield.<sup>98</sup> Captain Whitfield offered John Zdanowicz and Sterling to join him at the training base prior to departing for Little Creek. Sterling and John both chose to remain on the *Calvert*.

Training during this time was a tedious experience. The winter of 1943 was one of the worst winters in years for the Chesapeake Bay area. Sterling remembers the terrible weather: "Ah man, was it ever. You ran into some rough weather." Training went on however, even though the weather made it extremely difficult. The landing craft could only make slow progress in the ice-ridden waters of the northern Chesapeake. In very cold temperatures the landing craft would sometimes freeze-up. Pumps, and sometimes even the props, would freeze leaving the boat crew and embarked troops floating powerless in the rough waters.

Between January 10<sup>th</sup> and January 27<sup>th</sup>, the *Calvert* embarked Company C, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 23<sup>rd</sup> Marines for landing maneuvers in the Chesapeake Bay.<sup>99</sup> John Seymour and Rowland Lewis describe their experiences training with the *Calvert* during this timeframe as part of C Company:<sup>100</sup>

January 1943 will not be easily forgotten by anyone who was with us. Our Battalion went on "maneuvers" in the Chesapeake Bay, aboard the USS *Calvert*, to practice assault landings and disembarking to Higgins boats and re-boarding.

It so happened during our 16 days at sea that the weather was abominable. Although hard to imagine, the author still feels the Chesapeake Bay was the roughest sea he ever experienced, with six to nine months total sea time over the next three years. Climbing down or up the rope nets with the Higgins boats (Amtracs were not yet available) rising and falling with forty-foot sea swells was not a picnic. We learned in a hurry to let go instantly as the Higgins boat reached the crest of the swell. If you released a fraction of a second too late you could fall forty feet into the Higgins boat. If you climbed down too far, the boat would rise to swat you in the keister and knock you off the net. That was the better choice - at least you were in the boat, not falling. Re-boarding was slightly different. You had to grab the net at the top of the swell and climb five to six feet immediately or the next swell would raise the boat up to swat you. I also learned during these exercises that a waterproof belt was a great thing to have, unless it got wet. I lost some "valuables". Our practice landings were made on Solomon Island and as Russ Gross observed, it was "colder than hell". We agree that it was cold, although we don't know how cold it is in "hell". Another footnote to that history, in later years Rowland Lewis had a fishing boat on the Chesapeake Bay and often went fishing in the vicinity of Solomon Island. However, he had learned his lesson, he didn't go in January.

Even liberty, which meant precious time away from daily rigors of ship duty and training, didn't raise the men's spirits. The crew had the misfortune of having Norfolk as their primary liberty destination. A visit to Norfolk wasn't much better than being on the ship. The sailors' favorite nickname for Norfolk was 'Shit City':

At that the time we had support from everyone, no matter where you went stateside, you connected to people who were interested in seeing the war taken care of. The only place I can say that I ever ran into bad feelings, and that changed not to long after the war was on, was that Norfolk. First time we ever pulled into Norfolk, VA, I can still see the signs: No soldiers, sailors, marines, or dogs on the grass. You see Norfolk was a rough Navy town. The people that lived there weren't necessarily happy about all the sailors.

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<sup>98</sup> History of U.S.S. Calvert, 1

<sup>99</sup> Seymour, John, Company "C", 23<sup>rd</sup> Marines in WWII. Company History, < <http://www.c123rd.com/Chap09.html>>

<sup>100</sup> <<http://www.c123rd.com/Chap09.html>>

Coming from an area where you had the full support, not being used to that attitude took some getting used to. Now out of town, the attitude was altogether different. If you went out the main drag of Norfolk there was an amusement park and a rolling skating. You could go roller skating, which was always nice because there weren't many sailors there.

Sterling also recalls that Norfolk had the largest rats of all the eastern port cities. Special watches were set up to watch for rats trying to climb aboard via the mooring lines. When Sterling did have the time and money available to take advantage of liberty he would take a ferry to Portsmouth where decent theatres and restaurants could be found.

In early February the *Calvert* was reclassified as an Attack Transport, designated APA-32.<sup>101</sup> "The Navy Department, recognizing that it possessed no formally designated amphibious force and that amphibious operations were and would play a major role in the war, decided to classify ships accordingly based on a general ship nomenclature jointly developed with the British."<sup>102</sup>

Towards the end of February, the *Calvert* relocated to Florida to participate in training exercises with the Marines at Ft. Pierce ATB. The relocation to a warmer training area was greatly appreciated by the crew after enduring several months of frigid winter weather in the Chesapeake.

Sterling had the first of a series of encounters with Marines while at Ft. Pierce. One day he was working on rigging when a group of Marines began loitering in a hold where he was preparing to fill with supplies and equipment. They didn't react quickly enough with his request to move out of the way. He had a little fun with them, allowing a load of cargo to drop very quickly down next to them. The Marines threatened to throw him overboard if they ever got a hold of him.

In another case he was running a load a marines in a landing exercise in very rough weather. The weather was so rough that water was coming in over the sides of the landing craft and the bilge pumps could barely keep the craft afloat<sup>103</sup>. Other craft were having the same problems. Some were turning around and returning to their transports. Sterling kept going. The marines aboard kept demanding that he turn back and return to the *Calvert*. He replied back that he'd just as much see the whole bunch drown as go back. The Marines got so angry that they threatened to throw him overboard if he didn't turn around. He didn't turn around. The Marines didn't follow through on their threat.

While in Florida the *Calvert* received temporary boat crews. These boat crews were trained under the command of the *Calvert's* very own Captain Whitfield at the Little Creek Amphibious Training Base, Virginia. The new boat crews filled the coxswain, engineer, bowhook, and gunner positions for the *Calvert's* boats. The ship's original boat crews were reassigned back into regular deck duties in their respective divisions. The only boat crew not reassigned back to regular duty was the crew of the Gig. Sterling retained his primary assignment as Coxswain of the Captain's Gig. One change for him was a transfer out of damage control to the aft 3-inch gun.

According to Sterling the *Calvert's* original boat crews had little in the way of bad feelings in regard to the loss of their positions on the boats. However, the arrival of the temporary boat crews brought about a marked change in atmosphere aboard the *Calvert*. Many of the crews had an attitude that rubbed many of the *Calvert's* crew the wrong way. They came across as hot shots. The prevailing wisdom among the new boat crews, which Sterling attributes to their specialized training, was that the belief that they were better than the *Calvert's* original boat crews. It didn't help the situation that the new crews only had responsibilities for their landing craft. They did not have secondary duties, whereas most of the *Calvert's* crew retained multiple duties. Many of the deck crew saw the new boat crews as having a relatively easy life aboard the ship.

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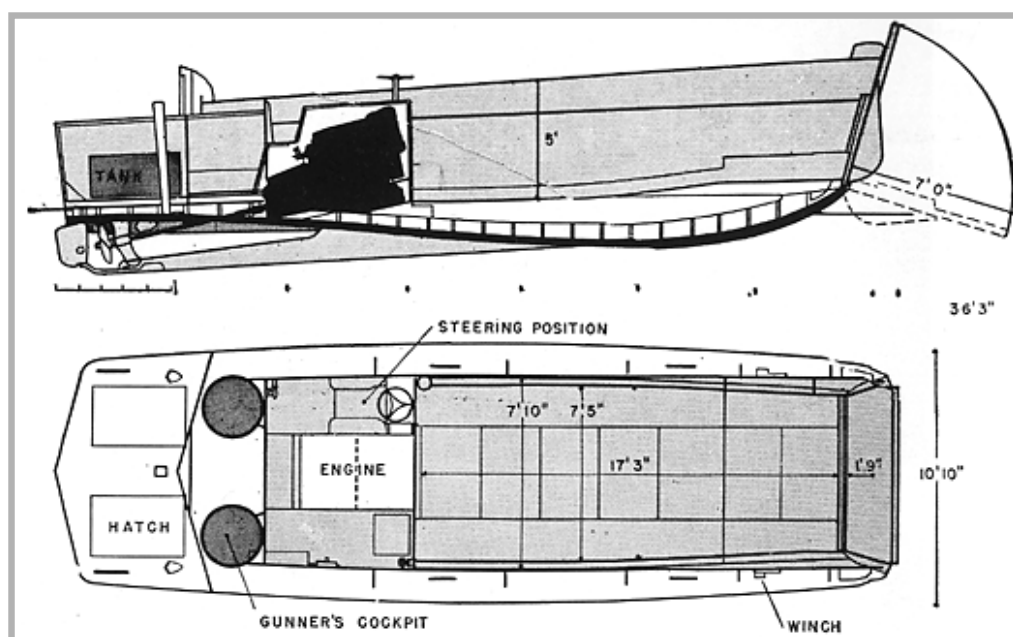
<sup>101</sup> "In 1942, when the AP number series had already extended beyond 100, it was decided that these amphibious warfare ships really constituted a separate category of warship from conventional transports. Therefore, the new classification of Attack Transport (APA) was created and numbers assigned to fifty-eight APs (AP #s 2, 8-12, 14-18, 25-27, 30, 34-35, 37-40, 48-52, 55-60, 64-65 and 78-101) then in commission or under construction. The actual reclassification of these ships was not implemented until February 1943." Naval Historical Center, USN Ships by Hull Number: APA/LPA, <<http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/shusn-no/apa-no.htm>>.

<sup>102</sup> NavSource, Naval History, Photographic History Of The U.S. Navy, Amphibious Photo Archive AP-65/APA-32 Calvert, <<http://www.navsource.org/archives/10/03032.htm>>

<sup>103</sup> Bilge Pump: The bilge is the lowest point of the craft. Bilge pumps keep the vessel from flooding when excess water enters the craft and collects in the bilge.

By mid-March the *Calvert* was back in the Brooklyn Navy Yard and then remained there until the end of March. During her stay the *Calvert* received several upgrades, including her first installation of radar.<sup>104</sup> When compared to the systems available at that time for Destroyers and larger ships, the *Calvert's* radar was a rather lightweight system. Sterling believes it was used primarily for identifying surfaced submarines.

Around this time the *Calvert* also began receiving the next generation landing craft, the Landing Craft, Vehicle and Personnel (LCVP).<sup>105</sup> The LCVP, commonly known as the Higgin's boat,<sup>106</sup> was a redesigned landing craft taking lessons from the shortcomings of the LCP. Although specifications, such as capacity, length, beam<sup>107</sup>, etc., remained similar to the original LCP there were several differences. The primary difference was that the LCVP was specifically designed with a ramp in the bow. The coxswain conned the craft from a position on the port quarter next to the engine compartment. The troops and equipment were located in front of the steering position and the engine compartment. When the craft hit the beach the ramp was dropped and the soldiers could disembark quickly over the ramp. The craft was built primarily of marine plywood and was structurally engineered to carry both troops and/or a vehicle. Improvements included a top speed of 12 knots.<sup>108</sup> It was also armed with two .30-Caliber machine guns.



Landing Craft, Vehicle and Personnel (LCVP)<sup>109</sup>

Sterling qualified as a coxswain in these new boats. Although disembarking was made much easier for troops, handling suffered. Most Coxswains preferred the handling of the older LCPs to the newer LCVPs. When the LCVP beached, with the ramp lowered, the craft was easily swamped if unloading proceeded quickly.<sup>110</sup> The LCVP was also more easily broached<sup>111</sup> in strong currents and tides. Sterling preferred the handling and maneuverability of the LCP. He was happy that the Captain's Gig remained an LCP.

<sup>104</sup> *Calversion*, Volume 43, 2, Information provided by Lawrence C. Wagner

<sup>105</sup> *Calversion*, Volume 38, 5, Information provided by Captain Thomas W. Glickman, USN, Retired

<sup>106</sup> The Higgins Boat Project, *The LCVP Design* <<http://www.higginsboat.org/html/eureka.html>>

<sup>107</sup> Beam: Maximum width of a vessel.

<sup>108</sup> The Higgins Boat Project, *The LCVP Design* <<http://www.higginsboat.org/html/eureka.html>>

<sup>109</sup> HyperWar: Ships of the U.S. Navy, 1940-1945, *LCVP (Landing Craft, Personnel, Vehicle)* <<http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USN/ships/LCVP.html>>

<sup>110</sup> Thomas E. Nutter, "Operation Husky: The Allied Invasion of Sicily, 1943." *Military History Online* <<http://www.militaryhistoryonline.com/wwii/husky/naval.aspx>>

<sup>111</sup> Broach: To be in the position where the craft is broadside to the wind or waves.

At the end of March the *Calvert* had returned to the Norfolk area. Sterling was still adjusting to the changes aboard the ship. Following the arrival of the temporary boat crews a formal boat division was formed. Previously the deck division command structure had responsibility for the boats in that division, such as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division boats. Lt. Marks, who joined the crew with the arrival of the new boat crews, was the newly assigned boat division officer. He was responsible for the leadership of the temporary boat crews as well as the care and operation of the ship's landing craft. As Coxswain of the Gig, Sterling had a few run-ins with Lt. Marks. One such incident happened very shortly after Lt. Marks joined the *Calvert*:

Norfolk can have the ugliest weather you'll ever see, the sleet, freezing rain and the wind. I was running the Gig as a liberty boat. Sometimes you used the Gig for liberty boats when the weather was bad. When you ran liberty boats you usually had so many hours on and so many hours off. I got back to the ship with what I thought was my last trip. You couldn't see. My bowhook lay flat on his belly on the deck at the front of the Gig as lookout. So I got back and pulled around to the boom to tie up. Lt. Marks was Officer of the Deck<sup>112</sup> that night and he hollered down and said "Hey Boats', make an extra trip, we're short a bunch of people." The last trip was supposed to be at 2300, but it was already close to midnight and it was so foggy you could barely see to the end of the boat. And I said "Are you serious?" and he replied, "Yes, I am ordering you to make another trip." So I replied with something along the lines of "kiss my ass" – I used to be a smart mouth for as young as I was, I mean a lot of the older guys' habits had rubbed off on me – and well, he said "now you're on report and you're going to make the trip or I'll get you for disobeying orders and insolence." So, I went and made the trip and we didn't get back until way late. When I come aboard he said that he had written me up. I asked why, and he said, "Because you told me to kiss your ass." I replied, "I didn't ask you to kiss my ass, I said oh hell I'm out of gas." He looked at me and didn't know what to say. To this day I'm not sure how I got away with it, but I did.

On April 9th, Captain L.A. Thackrey<sup>113</sup> relieved Captain Mullenix as commanding officer.<sup>114</sup> Shortly thereafter specially trained beach party personnel of the 1<sup>st</sup> Beach Battalion joined the *Calvert*. The Beach Party personnel were responsible for overall coordination of the initial stages of landing operations. Members of Beach Party were trained in areas such as facilitating communications between shore and the ships, coordination of the evacuation of wounded from the beach, organization of salvaging operations for broached and damaged landing craft, and keeping the beaches clear of obstacles and congestion.<sup>115</sup>

The Gig was assigned the role of transporting elements of the Beach Battalion to the beaches. In the forthcoming invasions Sterling would be responsible for transporting the beach party safely to the beaches. Most of these landings took place prior to the landing of the primary assault force.

Throughout the spring of 1943 the *Calvert*'s crew continued to participate in debarkation drills, gunnery exercises and tactical maneuvers at key amphibious training areas in the Chesapeake, such as the Solomons ATB at Cove Point MD and Little Creek ATB VA. The scene in the Chesapeake at this time is described in the *Calversion*:<sup>116</sup>

Four or five AP's from the transport squadron likely were lying off Cove Point. The landing crafts' white wakes were visible as they ran for the beach, retracted, or circled off the quarters of the mother ship. There would be LCT's in the river or nosed against the shore for practice landing. And later there would be LCI's, LST's, and LCS's maneuvering with each other. Then LSM's

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<sup>112</sup> Officer of the Deck: The Captain of a Navy ship is in absolute command of his vessel (except for limitations on his authority placed upon him by the Uniform Code of Military Justice). As it is not physically possible for him to be in active charge of the vessel twenty-four hours a day, he must have a surrogate in command, who is called the Officer of the Deck, and who is in charge of all others on board during the time he holds this temporary title. Even if the Captain is on the bridge, the Captain must specifically relieve the Officer of the Deck of the Conn if he wishes to direct the ship. This is so that there is no doubt as to whose primary responsibility is the maneuvering of the vessel.

<sup>113</sup> Lyman Augustus Thackrey. Thackrey went on to command the U.S.S. *Portland*, a Heavy Cruiser. Under his command, the *Portland* was involved in the Japanese surrendered the Caroline Islands at the Truk Atoll where Admiral Murray acting for Fleet Admiral Nimitz, accepted the formal capitulation of the senior Japanese military and civilian officials in ceremonies on the *Portland*. The USS *Portland*'s Guestbook, <[www.ussportland.org/guest/guestbook.html](http://www.ussportland.org/guest/guestbook.html)>

<sup>114</sup> [History of U.S.S. Calvert](#), 1

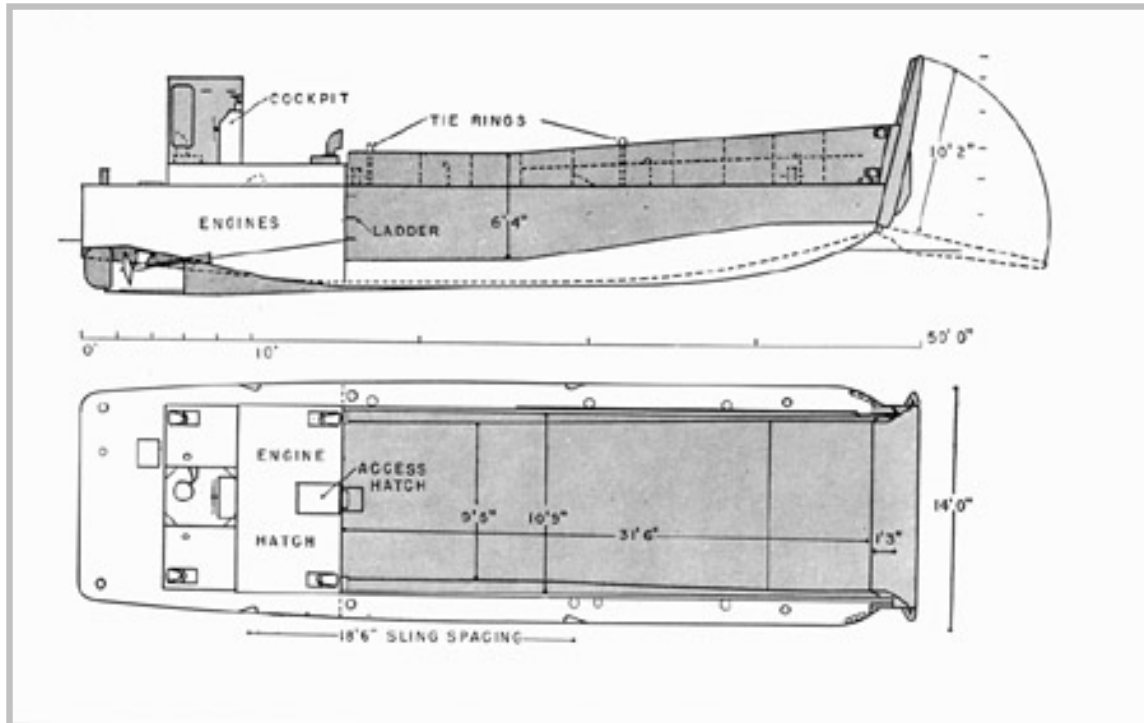
<sup>115</sup> [History of U.S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II Volume I, Chapter 2: Evolution of Modern Amphibious Warfare, 1920-1941](#). <<http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USMC/I/USMC-I-I-2.html>>

<sup>116</sup> *Calversion*, Volume 25, 4



would join in the training. Alongside in the harbor, the LCT's, LCM's, and LCVP's would be moored as solid as cigars in a box.

By late spring Sterling was qualified to run LCMs in addition to LCPs and LCVPs. LCMs were the largest type landing craft that the *Calvert* could carry. The LCM, short for Landing Craft, Mechanized, was a twin-screw, twin-rudder, all steel craft. The coxswain's conning area was an enclosed steel box aft of the troop/equipment area. It could carry sixty men or a thirty-ton tank. Given its size and shape the LCM was a rather clumsy boat to handle, but it was considerably sturdier which allowed it to be driven harder during landings. After the arrival of the temporary boat crews Sterling only drove an LCM as a substitute coxswain such as when another LCM coxswain was sick. The two versions of LCMs that Sterling was exposed to during the War included the LCM (Mark 2) and the LCM (Mark 3). The boat crews typically referred to these craft as 'Mike Boats' or 'Tank Lighters'.



Landing Craft, Mechanized (LCM)<sup>117</sup>

<sup>117</sup> <<http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USN/ships/ships-lcm2.html>>

## Operation Husky - Sicily

On June 12<sup>th</sup>, 1943 the *Calvert* departed the Chesapeake in company with a convoy of transports and escorts. The convoy's destination was the Algerian port of Mers el Kebir. The ports along the Algerian coast were the staging area for Operation Husky, the invasion of Sicily. In transit to the convoy experienced several submarine scares. Fortunately, none of the ships were torpedoed.<sup>118</sup> On June 21<sup>st</sup>, the convoy cleared the Strait of Gibraltar and entered the Mediterranean. Sterling was impressed at seeing the Rock of Gibraltar. He was also surprised by the phosphorescence in the Mediterranean waters at night: "it looked like there were spot lights shining up from under the water, it really lit up."



Shipmates filming the Rock of Gibraltar, 21 June 1943.<sup>119</sup>

On June 22<sup>nd</sup> the *Calvert* joined the Western Naval Task force at the small port of Mers El Kiber, Algeria.<sup>120</sup> For the next several weeks the crew made final preparations for the upcoming invasion of Sicily. Practice landings took place in and around the Gulf of Arzeu.<sup>121</sup> The beaches of Arzeu had been used during Operation Torch the previous autumn and debris still littered the beach. This made training maneuvers dangerous and several of the *Calvert's* landing craft were damaged during the practice landings.<sup>122</sup>

When the *Calvert* was not on maneuvers the crew kept busy loading the ship with supplies at Mers el Kiber during daylight hours. The Navy used locals from Mers El Kiber to help unload and reload the ships. These stevedores were paid around twenty-five cents for a day's work. They were nicknamed "seven-day pants people" by the sailors aboard the ships, given that they showed up at the docks each morning in what appeared to be the same pants from the previous days of work. Unfortunately, there were a few workers who attempted to sneak aboard to try to steal supplies. Constant lookouts were in place.

The few sailors from the *Calvert* who were allowed off of the ship were prohibited from leaving the dock area. Those who managed to sneak away from the docks during the day ran the risk of various un-pleasantries at the hands of the locals. Petty crime was the standard fare. However, rumors of men being castrated circulated through the ship's company. While some of the crew from the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Deck Divisions made it to the docks to assist in loading, the sailors in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Deck Division spent nearly all of their time rigging the booms and loading materials into the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division's holds. Sterling never even made it onto the dock.

<sup>118</sup> *Calversion*, Volume 38, 2, Information provided by M. J. "Mike" Latimer

<sup>119</sup> From Sterling Funck's personal photograph collection.

<sup>120</sup> John M Brown, *To All Hands: An Amphibious Adventure*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1943

<sup>121</sup> Frank Dailey, *Operation Husky--Invasion of Sicily, USS Edison DD439*. <<http://www.geocities.com/Pentagon/Base/1250/edisonsicily.html>>

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid*. Sterling does not recall that any of the *Calvert's* boats or boat crews encountering problems during these practice landings.

The fleet was also under sporadic air raids from German bombers the entire time. Each night the *Calvert* anchored at sea, fully darkened. It was a tenuous time for the crew.



The *Calvert* departed Mers El Kebir on July 5<sup>th</sup> in company with Attack Group One of the CENT Assault Group.<sup>123</sup> The CENT group was assigned to land along the southeastern coast of Sicily in the vicinity of the town of Scoglitti. The group traveled east along the Algerian coast towards Tunisia. On the morning of July 9<sup>th</sup> the weather was quite pleasant. However, by mid-day the weather took a turn for the worse. By late evening, in the face of a forty-mile-per-hour gale.<sup>124</sup>

The ship was undergoing considerable roll and pitch because of the wind velocity. After dark, and as the convoy neared the land, the wind abated and the sea subsided until at the time for anchoring for the debarking of the assault there was little wind, although a swell continued which gave the ship a ‘snapping’ roll.<sup>125</sup>

On the evening of July 9<sup>th</sup> the transports entered the Tunisian War Channel.<sup>126</sup> This was a mine-swept channel two-to-three miles in width through the shallows of the Mediterranean between Cape Serrat and Cape Bon.<sup>127</sup> Then, “after a feint to the South past Cape Bon the fleet headed for the Sicilian beaches”<sup>128</sup> taking a northerly course passing west of Malta. In the late hours of July 9<sup>th</sup> the task group assembled in the waters east of the Isle of Gozo.<sup>129</sup>

<sup>123</sup> CENT was the code name for the beaches at Scoglitti, Sicily.

<sup>124</sup> Center for Military History, *WWII Campaigns: Sicily*. <<http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/Brochures/72-16/72-16.htm>>

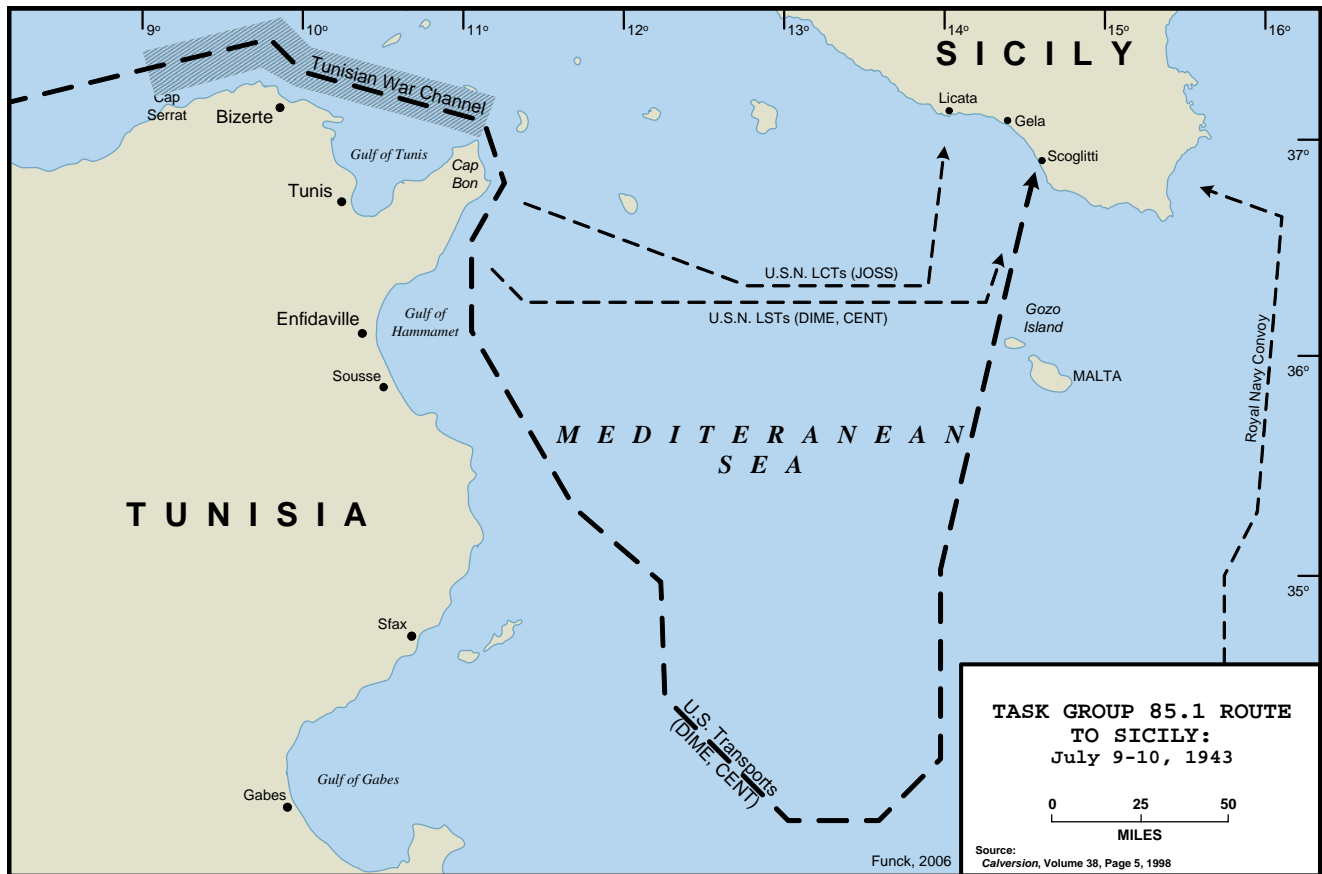
<sup>125</sup> *History of U.S.S. Calvert*, 2

<sup>126</sup> Brown, 100

<sup>127</sup> USS Swanson DD442, *Invasion of Sicily* <<http://www.geocities.com/swansondd443/swansic.html>>

<sup>128</sup> Brown, 100

<sup>129</sup> Thomas E. Nutter *Operation Husky: The Allied Invasion of Sicily, 1943* <<http://www.militaryhistoryonline.com/wwii/husky/naval.aspx>>



### D-Day Sicily – Saturday, July 10<sup>th</sup>, 1943

The task group arrived off the objective area in the very late hours of July 9<sup>th</sup><sup>130</sup>. The transports' anchorage area was approximately 8 miles south of the landing area. The *Calvert's* specific assignment was to land the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 180<sup>th</sup> Regimental Combat Team, 45<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, US Army, at Red Beach.<sup>131</sup> Red Beach, also known as "Wood's Hole" sector, was located approximately 10 miles northwest of the town of Scoglitti.<sup>132</sup>

Immediately upon arrival the crews began the process of unloading the landing craft, troops, and supplies for the landings.<sup>133</sup> The Army had requested a pre-dawn landing in an attempt to maximize the element of surprise.<sup>134</sup> However, little surprise was possible. The clouds had cleared, the moon was shining bright, and visibility was excellent.<sup>135</sup>

Very rough seas complicated debarkation. H-Hour was pushed to 0345, approximately 2 hours later than originally planned, given that the rough weather had slowed debarkation and organization of the landing craft.<sup>136</sup> The deck crews, boat crews, and soldiers were having a rough time. One memorable incident was the accidental firing of a .50-caliber machine gun from one of the vehicles being unloaded from one of the close-by transports. A stream of tracers arced into the air, making all involved in the operation uncomfortable knowing that the enemy was sure to have seen the tracers, thus threatening an already tenuous attempt at a surprise landing.

<sup>130</sup> <<http://www.militaryhistoryonline.com/wwii/husky/naval.aspx>>

<sup>131</sup> *History of U.S.S. Calvert*, 2

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> W.D. Vey, O.J. Elliot, *The Beach Boys, A Narrative History of the First Naval Beach Battalion, Amphibious Force, U.S. Atlantic Fleet, World War II, Sicily* <[http://www.1stbeachbattalion.org/beachhead\\_2.htm](http://www.1stbeachbattalion.org/beachhead_2.htm)>

<sup>134</sup> <<http://www.militaryhistoryonline.com/wwii/husky/naval.aspx>>

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

The rough seas made debarkation for the troops extremely dangerous task as well. Swells of 12 to 15 feet tossed the landing craft about as the troops attempted to climb down the nets.<sup>137</sup> A few ships tried to load at the rail in an attempt to minimize the risk of troops falling from the net ladders or being crushed between the landing craft and the hull of the transports.<sup>138</sup> The *Calvert*, not yet having improved davits that could safely hold a boat fully loaded with troops and supplies, required that the troops climb down into the landing craft via nets. The challenges of reaching a landing craft via net are explained by W.J. "Bud" Vey, a member of the 1<sup>st</sup> Beach Battalion who was on board the *Calvert*:<sup>139</sup>

... the small boats were subsequently lowered into the water with only the boat crews aboard, (as was done in the North African landings). Then when, (and if), the boats were "safely" in the water and detached from the davits, the assault troops were ordered over the side to make that treacherous trip down the cargo nets to the landing craft, presumed to be down there somewhere in the blackness. This method, of course, as we had learned earlier in the rolling seas off the Atlantic coast of Africa, had serious drawbacks also. Debarking troops, if they managed to make their way safely down the spaghetti-like cargo nets, soaking wet and slippery, ignoring the occasional crushed fingers, and placing the first foot tentatively on the landing craft's gunwales with the other still in the webbing of the cargo net only to find a moment later that the boat had disappeared into a trough 10 or 15 feet below the level at which the frightened soldier had first placed that tentative foot on the boat. The unfortunate troops were left in the air, desperately trying to find a segment of net into which they could place at least one foot, knowing that they must hang on somehow until the boat came back up on the next rise - and then try it all over again.

Compounding the situation was the roll and pitch of the transports, which terrorized the troops on the nets with their heavy outward, rolls over nothing but ocean and then the smashing counter roll against the rough, barnacle-encrusted sides of the ships. Farther down the side, many soldiers were caught on this counter-swing and crushed between the landing craft and the transports' hull as both vessels gyrated in the churning seas. It was not a night to remember. Until, and unless you have inched your way down a wet, slimy, slippery network of rope which is constantly in vertical and horizontal motion as its occupants try to take one more step to their destiny down there in the blackness, with 40 to 50 pounds of food, ammunition and weapons fastened somewhere on their bodies, sliding, grasping, slipping into that ridiculous little boat wallowing around in the monstrous and remorseless seas, it would be difficult to envision what a terrifying experience it could be. Finally, the knowing that once the first stage - a standing room only space in the landing craft - had been reached, they were to be transported somehow in this bucking, rolling piece of lumber with a ramp, through the pounding surf which would turn out to be just as ugly as they were imagining, onto a stretch of enemy beach, reported to be heavily mined, with the enemy lying in wait behind the dunes, cross-hairs zeroing in on their boats as they made the final approach, did absolutely nothing to erase the terror of the cargo net descent a short time before.

After each boat was loaded with troops it circled off the stern of the ship and then joined its assigned wave, with each wave keeping it's own circle. All of the waves followed a larger pilot boat to within a few miles of the beach. When the signal to cross the line of departure was given, the first wave headed towards the beach. Almost immediately the Germans and Italians lit up the fleet with spotlights. Destroyers and cruisers immediately shelled the enemy positions and put them out of action. The fire support vessels also shelled the beaches for several minutes as the landing craft made their way towards the beaches.

Sterling's first responsibility was to deliver elements of the Naval Beach Party to Red Beach prior to the landing of the first assault wave. By the time he reached the beach it was dawn and visibility was favorable. Fortunately no enemy fire was received. The Italian and German defensive positions were empty, presumably abandoned. However, landing was extremely difficult given various factors. Just getting to the beach was a challenge with the

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<sup>137</sup> *Calversion*, Volume 38, 2, Information provided by M. J. "Mike" Latimer

<sup>138</sup> <[http://www.1stbeachbattalion.org/beachhead\\_2.htm](http://www.1stbeachbattalion.org/beachhead_2.htm)>

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

presence of a series of sand and mud bars<sup>140</sup>, running parallel to the beach some 150 to 200 yards offshore.<sup>141</sup> Sterling suggests that most skilled Coxswains could back off of a sand/mud bar prior to getting broached against the bar. However, there were many boats that never made it across the sand bars. Closer to the beach the coxswains had terrific tides to deal with, which made it difficult to hold the landing craft perpendicular to the beach during troop debarkation.

Sterling returned to the *Calvert* and began participating in the transfer of troops and equipment to the beach. During this time German and Italian artillery batteries located further inland went into action shelling the beaches and boat lanes. A number of enemy tanks also appeared near the beaches and engaged the U.S. forces. Sterling recalls that the heaviest fire came during his 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> landings. Fortunately the fleet's fire support vessels quickly helped to put the enemy out of action.

Some of the *Calvert's* boats had also assumed patrol stations along the boat lanes. At daylight these patrol craft began to lay smoke screens to help obscure the beaches from enemy air attack.<sup>142</sup> Later in the day Sterling switched from transporting materials to assist these patrols. He would run parallel to the beach, as close as possible, while avoiding the sand and mud bars. Sterling remained at the helm of his boat throughout most of the day. As ordered he would switch between running patrols and the seemingly never-ending task of transferring equipment and supplies to the beach. The few breaks that Sterling did get from running the boat were spent aboard the *Calvert* manning the 3-inch gun.

Throughout the day the HMS *Abercrombie*, a Royal Navy monitor,<sup>143</sup> was underway in the area of the transport staging area. The *Abercrombie* crossed in front of the *Calvert* several times while Sterling was aboard the ship. Tremendous swells hit the *Calvert* every time the *Abercrombie* would fire her guns.

Although it was a bright and sunny day the seas remained rough and continued to challenge the fleet.<sup>144</sup> The swells worsened as the day progressed and by evening heavy swells and very rough surf made boat handling nearly impossible. By the end of D-Day, there were countless landing craft stranded on the soft sand and shifting sandbars. Even the transports were being tossed about in the rough seas.

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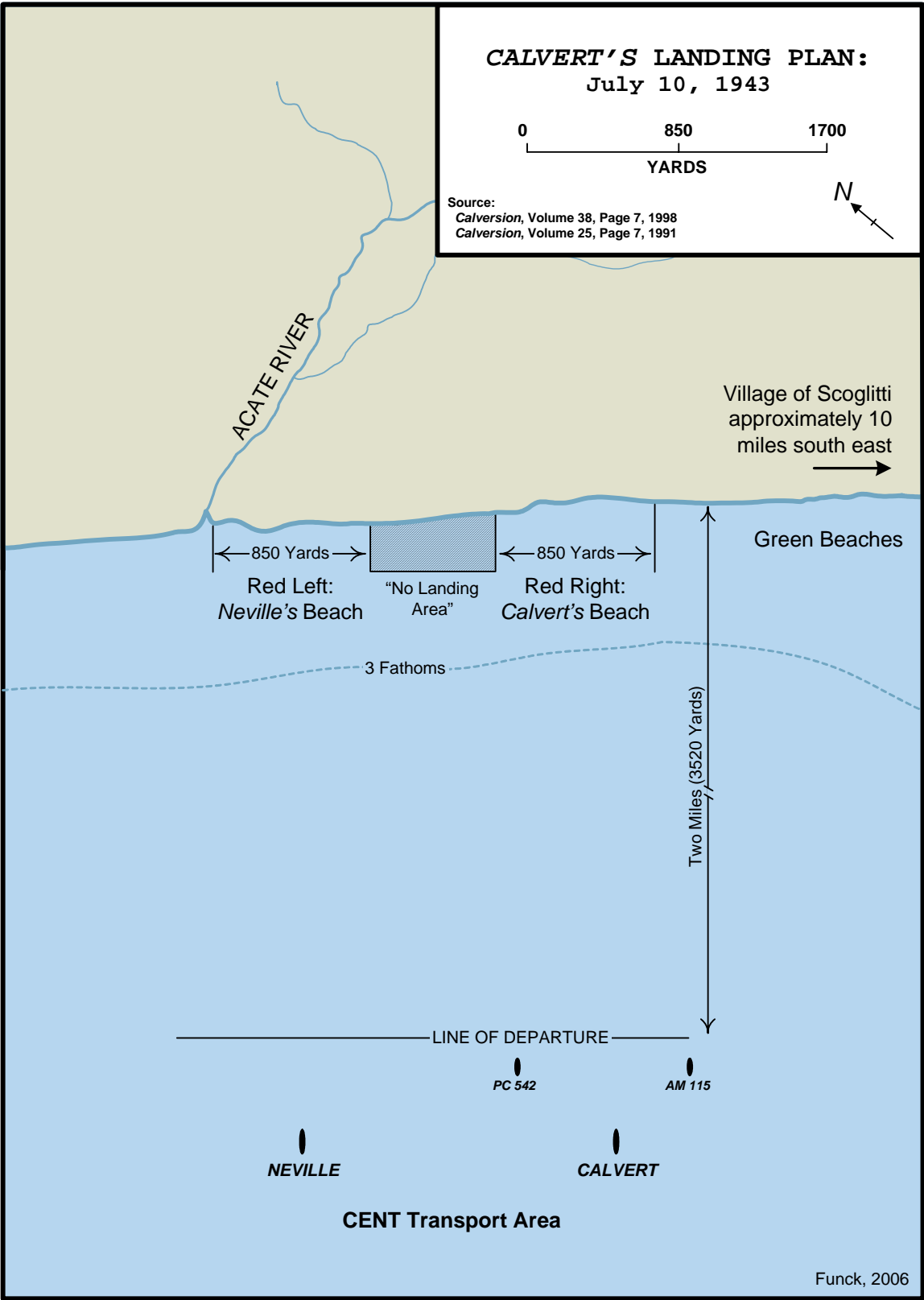
<sup>140</sup> Bar: An offshore ridge of sand, pebbles or other similar unconsolidated material lying parallel to and a short distance from the beach or shore.

<sup>141</sup> <<http://www.militaryhistoryonline.com/wwii/husky/naval.aspx>>

<sup>142</sup> Calversion, Volume 38, 6, Information provided by Captain Thomas W. Glickman, USN, Retired

<sup>143</sup> A monitor was a warship with the following characteristics: a low freeboard, heavy armor, heavy armament type, shallow draft, low speed coastal vessel. It was designed to operate close inshore with the primary mission of land bombardment. Steve Backer, HMS Abercrombie, The Last Monitor <<http://www.steelnavy.com/CombrigAbercrombie.htm>>

<sup>144</sup> <<http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/Brochures/72-16/72-16.htm>>





Red Beach, Scoglitti, Sicily<sup>145</sup>

Photo # 80-G-215086 Shipping off Scoglitti, during the invasion of Sicily, 10 July 1943



U.S. Navy ships off the Scoglitti beaches on D-Day, July 10<sup>th</sup>, 1943. Ships present are: USS *Calvert* (APA-32) second from left; USS *Neville* (APA-90) left center; USS *Frederick Funston* (APA-89) far right. An LST in the right center, with a light cruiser in the distance beyond.<sup>146</sup>

<sup>145</sup> From Sterling Funck's personal photograph collection. Photograph taken from the deck of the USS *Calvert*.

<sup>146</sup> Department of the Navy, Naval Historical Center, Online Library of Selected Images, Picture Data  
<<http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/images/g210000/g215086c.htm>>



During the evening hours of D-Day an unfortunate incident occurred. The invasion force was under constant aerial bombardment by German planes all throughout the day. The attacks continued into the night. Orders to open fire on any approaching aircraft were passed down to each ship. As the night wore on, a group of low flying aircraft flew directly overhead. Nearly every ship in the fleet opened fire on the planes after hailing the aircraft but receiving no response.

The formation was a group of US C-47 transport planes en-route to Sicily to drop paratroopers in support of the ground assault. They had the unfortunate situation of being many miles off-course and directly over the besieged amphibious force.<sup>147</sup> A total of 23 planes carrying paratroopers were shot down that night. The paratroopers' emergency recognition signal for that mission was a yellow flare, the same color flares that the German bombers were dropping. There had been no way for the fleet to know that they were firing on their own planes. No one knew that the casualties were friendly forces until dawn when American paratroopers were spotted in the water.<sup>148</sup>

Official Army History explains the situation:<sup>149</sup>

After a day of heavy fighting, Patton decided to reinforce his battle-weary center with over 2,000 additional paratroopers from his reserves in North Africa. He ordered that the 1st and 2d Battalions, 504th Paratroop Regiment, the 376th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion, and a company from the 307th Airborne Engineer Battalion be dropped near Gela on the night of 11 July. German aircraft had been active over the American sector all day, and consequently senior Army and Navy officers went to great lengths to inform everyone of the impending nighttime paratroop drop lest overanxious gunners fire on the friendly aircraft. Nevertheless, when the transport planes arrived over the beaches in the wake of a German air raid, nervous antiaircraft gunners ashore and afloat opened fire with devastating effect. Allied antiaircraft guns shot down 23 and damaged 37 of the 144 American transport planes. The paratroop force suffered approximately 10 percent casualties and was badly disorganized. Later investigation would reveal that not everyone had been informed of the drop despite the Seventh Army's best efforts.

The *Calvert* was one of very few ships that withheld fire during the incident. Sterling's only recollection as to why the *Calvert* did not fire upon the unidentified aircraft was the conservative approach that Captain Thackrey took in regards to offensive action: "If it wasn't a given or a complete known, I would say that he just didn't order firing on account of being not sure. But the crew was absolutely angry with Captain Thackrey that night. They couldn't believe he wouldn't give the order to fire. All we kept hearing from Lt. Tully was that the Captain kept saying that something didn't feel right." Sterling recalls that several Destroyer Escorts had the job of picking up the downed paratroopers that solemn morning.

The *Calvert's* boat crews spent D-plus One and D-plus Two transporting equipment to the beach and salvaging craft that had become disabled during the landings. Sterling, along with the rest of the Gig's crew, spent quite a bit of time salvaging wrecked landing craft. Many boats didn't make it across the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> sand bar. Sterling tells of the challenges experienced by some of the boat crews and the work necessary by the *Calvert's* carpenters to repair the landing craft:

You had sand and mud bars, which for a skilled Coxswain shouldn't have been that difficult to deal with. That didn't mean there weren't problems. The biggest problem was that guys would hit them and then the surf would get them sideways. If they weren't able to get their boat righted there was a good chance that they would bend the prop and then tear the brass structure that held the prop in place. If you were sideways and you kept working it, forward or reverse, you could chew up the brass prop. Well, when the propeller got chewed up too bad the vibration would damage the structure that held the prop in place. Each landing craft had at least one, if not two pumps that could keep a damaged craft afloat. So while the craft could usually be salvaged off of the bar and returned to the ship, the carpenter crew would have more trouble repairing the brass prop structure than it would a hole in the side of the boat. You could have a hole six-foot long and two-foot wide.

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<sup>147</sup> Brown, 164

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> <<http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/Brochures/72-16/72-16.htm>>

You see the boats were only made of plywood, layers and layers of plywood. But they could patch them up and paint them and you would never know that there was anything the matter - it was near impossible to tell that the craft had ever been damaged.

Following a laborious three days the *Calvert* departed the transport staging area and sailed back to Oran. Unfortunately several boat crews were stranded on Red Beach and did not make it back to the *Calvert* for departure from the transport zone. The situation where boat crews were stranded on the beach was a frequent occurrence. Sterling would experience a similar event himself later in the War.

Although the *Calvert* herself had suffered very few lost landing craft, this was not the case for other Transports. With so many landing craft lost or inoperable, many of the *Calvert's* craft were re-assigned to remain in the landing area to assist in the continued transport of materials and men to the beaches. Eventually these craft were permanently assigned to those APAs who had lost boats during the operation. As such many of the *Calvert's* boat cradles were empty for the return voyage. One of the very few boats remaining in the 2<sup>nd</sup> division was the Captain's Gig.

In Oran approximately 300 German prisoners of war, soldiers from Rommel's Afrika Corps<sup>150</sup> embarked on the *Calvert*. Sterling recalls that they were still clothed in their desert uniforms and that they had a relatively casual demeanor as they boarded the ship. The prisoners boarded the *Calvert* in the vicinity of the 2<sup>nd</sup> division via a gangplank. The POWs were searched prior to boarding, and as such Sterling had little-to-no contact with them as they were immediately ushered to the 1<sup>st</sup> Division. The daily routine changed slightly to accommodate the necessary security measures to guard the prisoners as well as to limit contact between the prisoners and the ship's crew. The prisoners were berthed in troops quarters and were allowed topside twice a day for half-an-hour at a time. The entire time they were onboard they were under heavy guard by a detachment of Marines.

The *Calvert's* boat crews eventually rejoined their ship in Oran after catching a ride aboard the USS *Alcyone* (AKA-7).<sup>151</sup> In late July the *Calvert* in company with a large convoy departed Oran for the voyage home to the United States. Rear Admiral Kirk, the "Flag",<sup>152</sup> was also aboard for the voyage home. Sterling and Zdanowicz transported Admiral Kirk to and from various locations and ships in the Gig quite frequently in late July and in early August.

In the book *To All Hands* Lieutenant John Mason Brown describes the invasion of Sicily to the men onboard a transport who are down below and who can't see the battle. While the majority of the book's narrative takes place on the USS *Ancon* (code named *Spelvin*), many of the pictures in the book were taken aboard the *Calvert* (code named *Bond*) while en-route back to the United States and shortly after arriving in the area of Norfolk. According to Hal Winter, Lt. Brown came up with the code name Bond based on the association with the Canadian whiskey, Lord Calvert, which was bonded whiskey.<sup>153</sup> In *To All Hands* there are an excellent assortment of pictures of the *Calvert's* crew:

- Page 12: The officer not wearing a cap and using the sextant is Lt. (JG) Osborne, Assistant Division Officer in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division.
- Page 18 and Page 20: Andy Surdyka, BM1C in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division.
- Page 32: Sailors of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division hanging laundry over empty boat cradles.
- Page 49: Seaman 1<sup>st</sup> Class Smith, (Smitty), reading a book on an empty boat cradle.
- Page 222: A boat crewman making fenders. Fenders were used to buffer contact and prevent chafing when alongside another vessel or a dock.
- Page 229: 2<sup>nd</sup> Deck Division sailors relaxing around empty boat cradles. The Captain's Gig is the lone boat cradled, and Sterling can be seen working in the Gig. The sailor in the far right of the picture reading a book is Tom Sawyer. The sailor in the foremost right of the first row of sailors, looking directly at the camera, is Harold Pottinger. This picture would have been taken shortly after the *Calvert* returned to Norfolk.

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<sup>150</sup> *Calversion*, Volume 38, 7, Information provided by Captain Thomas W. Glickman, USN, Retired

<sup>151</sup> *Calversion*, Volume 38, 6, Information provided by Captain Thomas W. Glickman, USN, Retired

<sup>152</sup> Flag: Refers to "flag rank", i.e., that of an admiral.

<sup>153</sup> *Calversion*, Volume 36, 2.

## Last Days In The Atlantic

Upon arrival in Newport News, VA, the prisoners were unloaded. The *Calvert* returned to Norfolk on August 3<sup>rd</sup>.<sup>154</sup> Two days later Sterling took leave to visit his family. He returned to Norfolk to rejoin the *Calvert* on August 12<sup>th</sup>. When he returned he found that the LCVPs that had been left in Sicily were replaced with new boats. There was also a brand new LCP that replaced the Captain's previous Gig.

A few new sailors also joined the crew. One young sailor in particular, Harold Pottinger, joined the ship's company as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Seaman. Harold remembers Sterling and Tom Sawyer:<sup>155</sup>

When boarding the *Calvert* August 1943 in Norfolk, I was an 18 year old sailor, lonely for home, scared, and not knowing a soul. I was assigned to the second division where upon I came in contact with Sterling and his senior petty officer a fine sailor by the name of Tom Sawyer. I could not have found two finer leaders who had much empathy for young recruits like myself. I seemed to fit in real well. Sterling was a kind leader and he was someone a young person like myself could go to for advise.

We mustered each morning, the entire 2nd division, and that was done by Sterling and Tom. They would stand before our group and recite our names for roll call and also checking our mode of dress, hair trim, etc. Then we would be given our daily work duties.

The *Calvert's* next destination was New York for a brief overhaul. During this overhaul the ship was fitted with heavier boat handling equipment, davits, shivs, and cables. This heavier hardware supported at-the-rail loading of soldiers into the landing craft. Sterling never quite trusted the rigging to support the heavy loads placed on it during at-the-rail loading, having seen earlier attempts at this method fail. That's not to say he had a choice in the matter. Loading at the rail became the standard loading practice. However, the landing nets were typically still hung over the side of the ship just in case they were needed. To this day he is amazed that the davits and cables withstood the stresses of a fully loaded landing craft in rough weather.

On August 21<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant Commander Edward J. Sweeney, USNR, then the *Calvert's* Executive Officer, relieved Captain Thackrey as commanding officer.<sup>156</sup> Captain Sweeney had originally served on the *Harry Lee* and he transferred to the *Calvert* following the breakdown of the *Harry Lee*. Captain Sweeney would make a number of impressions on the crew of the *Calvert*. He had many sides to him, which the crew often witnessed. Sterling got to know the Captain better than many of the other enlisted men:

Captain Sweeney used to like to come up and stand next to you while you were running, this was in the Pacific. I'd ask, "You want to take over Captain?" And he would take over and run the boat and he got a kick out of that. Same way when you were going into harbor or coming up along side at sea to refuel a sea, his biggest kick, just like a kid at Christmas time, when it was time to give a signal on the horn, he would stand their waiting to blow the horn. He got a real kick out of blowing the horn on the ship.

Captain Sweeney was also fond of the bottle. On numerous occasions Sterling remembers Captain Sweeney returning to the ship quite lit up after a night of socializing in the officers club, "He loved to get tanked, but he was a good skipper." Even more amusing was Captain Sweeney's habit of commandeering Marine jeeps while in port and claiming them as his own. The first time this occurred was while the *Calvert* was still in New York. Although Sterling was not on watch the night it happened, he heard the story of how Captain Sweeney spotted a jeep and took action. As described in the *Calversion*:<sup>157</sup>

It was during that yard overhaul when we satisfied Capt. EJ Sweeney's desire to have his own automobile aboard ship just as were held by the commanding officers of capitol ships. With the

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<sup>154</sup> *Calversion*, Volume 11, 5, Information provided by C. Simpson

<sup>155</sup> Email from Harold Pottinger, December 9, 2003

<sup>156</sup> *History of U.S.S. Calvert*, 3

<sup>157</sup> *Calversion*, Volume 41, 4, Information provided by Bill Marks, Lt. USNR (Ret)

help of quick switch artists from Chiefs to ship's officers and the gang in the boat engine shop, a brand new Marine Corps yard patrol jeep was filched while a Marine shavetail and his Sgt. driver were being entertained in Chief's quarters and the Ward room. The jeep was hoisted to the boat deck where it was swiftly painted ship's color, numbered and hidden under tarps. The Marine search party did not find it!

The *Calvert* returned to the Norfolk area to prepare for departure to the Pacific. Just shortly before departing Norfolk Sterling found himself in an interesting situation.

It was down there at Portsmouth Naval Hospital. I was out calibrating the compass on the Gig. There was a launch of nurses going ashore and I pulled up along side of them with this shiny new Gig and I was kidding them. You know how smart sailors are. So I came up along side of them, now mind you these were all officers, and I asked them who wanted to go for a ride. So one thing led to another, I just all of a sudden made a hard veer to the left, I didn't want to open throttle too much because I'd a rocked their launch, you know.

As soon as I got a little piece away I shoved the throttle all the way forward to show off and hot dog in front of them. What do you know, I ran right into a big buoy. It stuck out of the water six or eight feet, but I hit it. The bow split right down the middle, wide enough that you could run your hand through the crack. The water just poured in and there was no way that the pumps were going to keep me afloat for long. I made for the ship as quick as I could.

It just so happened that same day another coxswain had come in around the ship. He had been on a stores run. Well he come back and unloaded the stores that he had onboard and he went around the ship to moor the landing craft. As he came around, went to shift from forward to reverse - and we were with them boats just like kids are with cars, I mean we run them - and he never stopped and he plowed headlong into the pier and split one open. They were still hoisting that one aboard when I came flying around the ship running in circles, 'cause it was going down. They got me on the davit, picked me up, took the plugs out and let the water drain out of it.

Well, Lt. Marks was boat division officer and we also had a fellow by the name of Toby O'Brien that had just become Leading Boatswain Mate of the Boats. When I got on board Lt. Marks said to O'Brien "look what your protégé done now, I want a written report". So I went and talked to Tom Sawyer. Sawyer said, "I don't know what to tell you. What went on?" So I told him I was just clowning around with a launch full of nurses and when I throttled up to leave I just didn't see the buoy and I hit it. Anyhow he said "I don't know, go talk to go talk to Chief Del Gaizo, and see what he says. But if Marks ordered you to hand in a written report you have to give him a written report." You see, Del Gaizo was the Chief Master of the Arms at that time.

So I went and talked to the Chief. He laughed and said, "Well, just write down 'carelessness' and turn it in and give it to him. Just tell him you weren't paying attention. Don't tell him what happened." So I did what he told me.

Marks tore it up. He said, "That's no report as far as I am concerned, I want a written report." Well, I went back and told Del Gaizo that Marks tore it up. Del Gaizo said "That's what I figured what he would do." Now Del Gaizo was a regular Navy guy, he'd been in for years. He said "I figured he wouldn't take that as a report." So he said "Write it down again and give it to me."

Now Marks had put me on report, which meant you went before the Executive Officer or the Captain for a hearing. So we get to the XO's mast, and Del Gaizo tells me to ask for a Captain's Mast<sup>158</sup>. Well, I said "I don't want to ask for a Captain's Mast because if I get away with it everybody on the ship will say I got away with it because I'm Coxswain of the Gig, or if I don't

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<sup>158</sup> Captain's Mast: A formal hearing before a ship's captain usually held on the quarterdeck. Its purpose is to mete out punishment/justice to members of the ship's company who are guilty of minor infractions of naval regulations.

get away with it I'm going to face a stiff penalty, a big fine, and probably get busted." Del Gaizo said, "No, you aren't going to get busted." So that's what I did, I asked for a Captain's Mast.

Lt Marks asked The Master of Arms read off the charges, which included the fact that I had submitted a report and that he had tore it up. Lt. Marks said, " Well I didn't consider it a report, all it said was carelessness." Captain Sweeney said, "If he said it was carelessness, then that's a report to me." So I got away with that one.

Then later one day I was taking the Skipper somewhere and he was up at the front, like he did, and he said, "Hey Boats, what actually happened that day you hit the buoy?" So I told him. He just laughed. He was a good Skipper.

What amazes Sterling is that he didn't throw his Bowhook, Potacker, into the drink with the force with which he hit the buoy: "Potacker was right up front on the deck polishing brightwork<sup>159</sup>, and how he kept from going overboard I'll never know." A short time following the incident Lt. Marks made a comment to Sterling that the damage for his misadventure was around \$13,000. For a boat made of plywood, the actual amount was likely much lower.

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<sup>159</sup> Brightwork: Polished metal objects, and sometimes woodwork, especially topside, which was kept scraped, scrubbed and polished.



Second Division Deck Crew, USS *Calvert*.<sup>160</sup>

First Row: Harold Pottinger, second from left; Kelly, third from left; Dougan, fourth from left; Smith (Smitty), third from right.

Second Row: Lt. Brumstead, first on left. Third Row: John Zdanowicz, second from left; Sterling Funck, third from left; Andy Surdyka, fourth from left; Chief Del Gaizo, second from right; Tom Sawyer, first on right.

Sterling is wearing his Boatswain's Mate Pipe (see black lanyard) and was on-duty at the time. All other men wearing life vests were also on duty at the time the photo was taken.

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<sup>160</sup> From Sterling Funck's personal photograph collection.

## Heading to the Pacific

In late August the *Calvert* departed Norfolk and headed for the West Coast. On August 30<sup>th</sup> the ship passed through the Panama Canal.<sup>161</sup> Sterling describes what he remembers:

I can't really remember the locks for some reason or another and I've never read about it, but it seemed to me that we had to lower our outboard boats. You usually had, especially in the 2<sup>nd</sup> division, two boats on top of each other, double decked, and you had four davits on both port and starboard side, and then you had a boat hanging outboard hanging on the actual boat davit. In other words the other two boats were in a cradle one over top of the other, then the other was hanging outboard. And for some reason or another all I can remember about going through the canal, and I can't even swear to this, was that our outboard boats were lowered and had crews in them, but we had lines going from the ship back to the boats trailing the ship. I can remember, and I don't where it is coming from, but I believe we called the *Calvert* "Mother Goose and her baby ducks" after going through the canal.

The *Calvert* arrived in San Diego on the 8<sup>th</sup> of September.<sup>162</sup> The next day the *Calvert* departed San Diego, sailed north, and arrived in San Francisco on the 12<sup>th</sup>.<sup>163</sup> It so happened that Captain Whitfield's family was now living in San Francisco. During liberty Sterling took advantage of the time and visited Captain Whitfield's wife and daughter. Of course Captain Whitfield came home while Sterling was there. Sterling figured he'd get it from Captain Whitfield. It turned out to be a cordial visit with his old Captain.

Sterling also took the opportunity to make some extra money while he was on leave in San Diego:

I was broke, so I thought I'd make a couple extra bucks. A lot of guys would go ashore and get their uniforms steam cleaned. So I was in a shop one day and there was a long line. I asked if he needed help. So I pressed Navy uniforms for him. I only did it for a few days in account of getting caught. I can't remember what he paid me, but it wasn't much. Of course those days things weren't that much.

On September 20<sup>th</sup> the *Calvert* departed San Francisco en-route to Pearl Harbor.<sup>164</sup> Six days later the crew arrived in Hawaii. There they docked at Pearl Harbor. Nearly two years had passed since the Japanese attack in 1941. By this time the channels were completely cleared out to accommodate the heavy ship traffic in and out of Pearl Harbor. Sterling didn't try to think too much about it, but there were constant reminders of what had happened: "You could see hulls, sterns, bows, sticking out of the shallows where they had been moored. But you were kept busy so you didn't think much about it."

While en-route to Hawaii Sterling passed the test for Boatswain Mate 2<sup>nd</sup> Class (BM2C) and was promoted forward one rate. With this promotion Sterling took on several new responsibilities. One such responsibility was to stand watch on the bridge as Boatswain Mate of the Watch. During his assigned watch, which was usually four hours on and then four hours off, Sterling would accompany the Conning Officer, or the Officer of the Deck (OOD), and pass along orders to messengers and runners on assignments.

Watches were normally 4 hours in duration, except for "dog watches"<sup>165</sup> which were two hours in duration. Sterling was normally assigned the 1<sup>st</sup> night watch (2000 – 0000) or the mid watch (0000 – 0400). However at times he also stood watch during the 1<sup>st</sup> dog watch (1600 – 1800) or the 2<sup>nd</sup> dog watch (1800 – 2000). These were the least desirable watches for several reasons. First, the sun was low on the horizon, which made it the best time for submarine attack. The Captain was usually on the bridge during these watches, so the crew on the bridge was kept

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<sup>161</sup> *Calversion*, Volume 43, 2, Information provided by Lawrence C. Wagner

<sup>162</sup> *History of U.S.S. Calvert*, 3

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>165</sup> The dogwatches are only two hours each so the same sailors aren't always on duty at the same time each afternoon. Some experts say dogwatch is a corruption of dodge watch and others associate dogwatch with the fitful sleep of sailors called dog sleep, because it is a stressful watch. But no one really knows the origin of this term, which was in use at least back to 1700. *U.S. Navy Reserve Glossary of Terms*, <[http://www.navalreserve.com/glossary\\_term.html#d](http://www.navalreserve.com/glossary_term.html#d)>

very busy. The entire crew of the ship looked forward to the close of the 2<sup>nd</sup> dogwatch and the close to one of the more stressful periods during the day.

Sterling was responsible for relaying commands from the OOD to the crew while he was on watch. He had at his disposal two Messengers of the Watch to run messages and errands. He was also responsible for sounding General Quarters. The means to signal the crew to be ready for a command was for Sterling to sound the Boatswain Mate's Pipe over the intercom system, followed by a spoken command. Sterling was proud to wear this badge of the BM2C. For many months prior to his promotion Sterling practiced and perfected his piping<sup>166</sup>.

Sterling was also armed with a M1911 Colt .45 pistol during watches. During most watches while underway and while in port he had a full clip loaded and one round in the chamber. However in some cases his side arm was not loaded and had an empty clip, as were the regulations while docked in certain ports such as Norfolk. In other ports regulations allowed a full clip, but no round in the chamber.

By now Sterling outranked a good number of the older sailors in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division, particularly some of the sailors who had transferred in from other ships, and sailors who were from the pre-war Navy. The general attitude of most of the older sailors, some of who had upwards of fifteen years in, was one of indifference when the younger boatswain mates would instruct them during deck work and rigging work, such as correctness or safety. However, there were certain sailors who just didn't like Sterling. One Coxswain in particular, Andy Surdyka, gave Sterling a hard time on many occasions.

There were guys that you just didn't get along with. Like Andy Surdyka, he'd rather have thrown me overboard than have looked at me. He was an old Navy guy, he had a lot of time in. If you weren't busted back a rate two or three times in your career you weren't considered a good sailor. Some of us young kids got working with some of the older guys and they'd try to make it rough for us. They couldn't understand someone who only had a few years in, while they had 10 or 14 years, being of equal or higher rate than them.

Being a 'Smart Dutchman' (as he calls himself on occasion) Sterling didn't let the older sailors push him around. He could give it back to them as well as they could dish it out to him. There was a slightly less formal atmosphere on the *Calvert*. For someone coming off of a man-o-war, such as a destroyer or battleship, it took some getting used to. That's not to say that the atmosphere on the *Calvert* was totally slack, as Sterling explains: "The officers kept a tight ship, regulations were followed. You would never see an officer with his sleeves rolled up, no matter what work was being performed or how hot the weather."

Finally, only a few other classes of ships rivaled the intensity of work on a Transport: "APA, them and minesweepers, were the hardest working ships in the Navy. Now, they weren't the strictest, as far as regulations. But as far as working they were probably the hardest working ships at the time." For sailors recently transferred to the *Calvert* the working conditions took some time to get used to. Rigging was an important skill for any sailor aboard a Transport. Many of the transfers did not have the depth of rigging experience that the younger coxswains had gained while aboard the *Calvert*. When they had a young 'kid' telling them how to do things, they often resented it. Sterling recalls that even some of the officers weren't keen on the situation. They were used to and preferred dealing with older sailors.

Sterling found ways to keep busy and out of too much trouble: "I was fortunate to be on one [transport] that had a good crew, we seen a lot of stuff, a lot of action." Sterling took naturally to rigging. He spent a great amount of time mastering his cable splicing and rigging skills. He was able to pass much of his knowledge to younger and less experienced sailors. He had also formed strong working relationships with many of the officers aboard the *Calvert*. As part of the gun crew Sterling spent quite a bit of time with the *Calvert's* Gunnery Officer, Lt. Tully, and they formed a very good working relationship.

With those sailors with which Sterling had originally served with on the *Harry Lee* very few problems arose. For example, shortly following promotion to BM2C Sterling was transferred off the gun crew and back into the Fire and

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<sup>166</sup> Sterling is fairly certain that he brought his Boatswain's Pipe home with him after the war, however he has not been able to find it after many years of searching his personal belongings.



Damage Control. He took on a more senior role coordinating the efforts of the Damage Control Party and worked well with these shipmates.

Captain Sweeney continued on with his adventures. One of Captain Sweeney's more memorable incidents occurred while the *Calvert* was docked at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor. He was driving his jeep back to the ship after a late night of drinking and drove the jeep straight off of the dock and into the water. Sterling had just been relieved as the Boatswain Mate of the Watch when this happened. The salvage crew, members of the 3<sup>rd</sup> division, went to work in recovering the jeep, which was abandoned on the dock the next morning. Sterling recalls that Captain Sweeney was able to find a replacement jeep in fairly short order.

On another night Captain Sweeney returned from a night of drinking while Sterling was standing watch. The *Calvert* was tied up next to a flagship, and Captain Sweeney had to cross over the flagship to board the *Calvert*. Upon boarding the *Calvert*, he entered the bridge and began handling controls. He accidentally hit the General Quarters lever and within moments the entire fleet in Pearl Harbor was at full alert. It took a few minutes to pass word that it was a false alarm.

Sterling continued on with his own adventures and cracked the Gig a second time. However this time he was not at fault. A launch cut in front of the Sterling while he was calibrating the Gig's compass near Ford Island. Sterling swerved to miss hitting the boat: "I missed the launch and ended up running straight into a buoy. So, I cracked the Gig a second time. I was chewed out, but I wasn't given as hard a time as I had been given back in Norfolk the first time."

In late September 75 officers and 1314 soldiers of the Army's 165<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 27<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division embarked on the *Calvert*.<sup>167</sup> Through the middle of October the crew of the *Calvert* trained with the 165<sup>th</sup> on the beaches of Kauai and Maui. Never before had an Army group landed on a Pacific atoll.<sup>168, 169</sup> Neither did the boat crews aboard the *Calvert* have experience in the Pacific. The training exercises were intended to focus the landing crews and soldiers on the new challenges that they would face in Pacific landings.

Learning to run the landing craft amongst coral obstructions was a challenge for the boat crews. Unlike the sand and mud bars of previous landings, where a craft might only be broached, the coral could cause severe damage to a landing craft. According to Sterling, if a landing craft was broached on coral, there was a high likelihood that the screw would be damaged against the coral. In an attempt to minimize damage to the landing craft, the Navy would attempt to blast openings 25-to-50 meters wide through the most obvious coral obstructions to open boat lanes to the beaches. However, all the *Calvert's* coxswains had to learn new skills for dealing with coral during landings. The *Calvert's* boat crews spent many of their days in October and in early November practicing landing on the rough beaches of Hawaii.

As the first week of November came to a close the crew of the *Calvert* was nearing the start of their participation in the United States strategy of 'Island-hopping', or 'leapfrogging', toward the Japanese homeland<sup>170</sup>:

The basic concept of the "leapfrog" strategy was to seize those islands essential for our use, bypassing many strongly held intervening ones which were not necessary for our purpose. The disparity between our naval power and that of the enemy made it virtually impossible for the Japanese to support the garrisons of bypassed islands, and these bases became innocuous. (Though considerable effort was required to keep them that way).

In a little over two-weeks Sterling would face a new and harsh enemy, the Japanese soldiers defending the islands that they had previously captured. Although he heard many stories while in Pearl Harbor about the fierceness of the Japanese soldiers, he would soon experience a new level of enemy engagement during landings.

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<sup>167</sup> History of U.S.S. Calvert, 3

<sup>168</sup> Atoll: A ring-shaped coral island and reef that nearly or entirely encloses a lagoon. Often comprised of many small islands.

<sup>169</sup> Center of Military History, The Capture of Makin: 20-24 November, 1943. Center of Military History, 1990 <<http://www.army.mil/cmhp/wwii/makin/mak-fm.htm>>

<sup>170</sup> Chapin, John C. Captain, U.S. Marine Corps Reserve (Ret). Breaching The Marianas: The Battle for Saipan. Marines in World War II Commemorative Series <<http://www.nps.gov/wapa/indepth/extContent/usmc/pcn-190-003123-00/sec1.htm>>

## Operation Galvanic – Gilbert Islands

The *Calvert* departed Hawaii the afternoon of November 10<sup>th</sup> and steamed southwest. The crew and the soldiers aboard were informed of their mission shortly after departure.<sup>171</sup> The *Calvert* was assigned to the Northern Task Group for Operation Galvanic, the invasion of the Gilbert Islands.<sup>172</sup> This operation was the first of several massive amphibious operations intended to break and penetrate the Japanese line of defense in the Central Pacific.

The forces taking part in Operation Galvanic were split into two groups. The Northern Task Group would land at the northernmost atoll in the Gilberts Islands chain. The Southern Task Group was assigned the task of taking Tarawa located approximately 100 miles south east of Makin atoll. The Army would take Makin. The Marines would take Tarawa. The *Calvert*, would land at Makin atoll.

### Crossing The Line

At 1520 on November 15<sup>th</sup> the *Calvert*, in company with the Northern Task Group, crossed the Equator and the International Date Line.<sup>173</sup> Each crossing in itself was a special event in a sailor's career. In the 'Crossing the Line' ceremony those sailors who had never crossed the Equator underwent the rite of passage from Pollywogs to Shellbacks. The sailors on the *Calvert* were also entrusted the honor of becoming 'Golden Shellbacks' following their entrance into the Realm of the Golden Dragon, a.k.a., the crossing of the International Dateline. As tradition held it was the responsibility of the Shellbacks to initiate the Pollywogs. The Crossing the Line rite of passage is explained below:<sup>174</sup>

Traditionally, the night before the crossing King Neptune (the most senior shellback) sends a messenger informing the Captain that he intends to board the ship the following day, and summoning list of slimy wogs to appear before him. ... The actual ceremony revolves around the pretext of "preparing" the wogs for their audience before King Neptune. This "preparation" involves any number of disgusting, dirty, deprecating and/or difficult actions ... kissing the "Royal Baby" (the fattest chief on board) on the belly ... Other embarrassing routines with the Royal Navigator, Dentist, Cops, Chaplain, Judges, and Attorneys continue throughout the day. The penultimate ritual is a "shaving" by the Royal Barber with a huge wooden 'razor,' after which one is dunked in a tub of water (often dyed a hideous color) to "cleanse" oneself for the final meeting with King Neptune. At this meeting King Neptune appears with his entire retinue, Queen Amphitrite, and Davy Jones and officially proclaims the wogs to be trusty shellbacks. The day ends with each of the new shellbacks receiving elaborate certificates testifying to their safe passage.

There were very few Shellbacks on board the *Calvert*. Only a few officers and enlisted men had previously crossed the line. This didn't keep the few Shellbacks from having their fun with the 'slimy wogs.' Sterling describes what he recalls of the event:

I was on watch for most of the ceremony, so I really didn't know what was happening on the ship unless something big happened. I can remember them setting up. I can remember some of the guys that took parts in the ceremony. They had some rough stuff, and some of the guys got pretty well bruised up. They made a pitchfork that had four prongs and was charged up with an automobile battery. You got soaking wet crawling through these mazes of canvas hoses, they had fire hoses it at either end, and then when you crawled out you got jabbed on the behind while you were getting up. And believe me, you felt it. A lot of guys ended up black and blue, and several in sickbay for a day or two. But none of the crew complained because not that many guys ever got to cross the line. I had it pretty easy because I was on watch for most of the ceremony. All I got was my Indian haircut, I had to crawl through the maze, and I got poked with that pitchfork. Even during the war,

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<sup>171</sup> [Capture of Makin](#), 30.

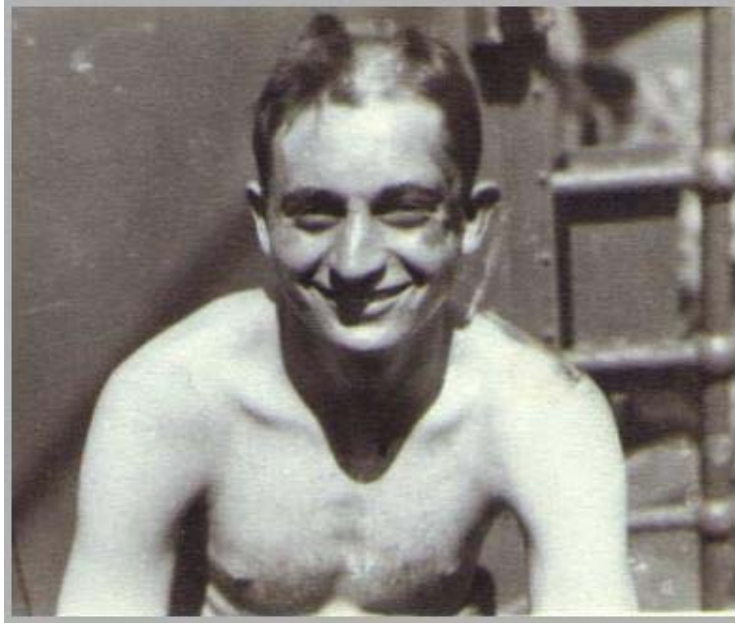
<sup>172</sup> [History of U.S.S. Calvert](#), 3

<sup>173</sup> [Calversion](#), Vol 23, 1990, 7

<sup>174</sup> Swartz, MIDN 4/C. [Crossing the Line: Tradition, Ceremony, Initiation](#) <[http://www-cs-students.stanford.edu/~lswartz/crossing\\_the\\_line.pdf](http://www-cs-students.stanford.edu/~lswartz/crossing_the_line.pdf)>, 4 -5. See Appendix G for more information on the history of the "Crossing the Line" Ceremony.

on the way to the Gilberts, they took time to make a ceremony of it. It was a nice escape from the seriousness of the war.

Following the ceremony the crew quickly focused back on the task at hand, preparation for the quickly approaching operation. The *Calvert's* destination was the western shores of Butaritari Island, the largest Island in the Makin atoll.



Sterling following the Crossing the Line ceremony (above) and pictures taken during the ceremony (below).<sup>175</sup>



<sup>175</sup> From Sterling Funck's personal photograph collection.





Front page of Sterling's copy of How The U.S.S. Calvert Crossed The Line.





Sterling's Crossing The Line Certificate





Sterling's Golden Dragon Certificate

## D-Day Makin Atoll – Saturday, November 20<sup>th</sup>, 1943

In the early hours of November 20<sup>th</sup> the Northern Attack Force arrived at the staging point for the invasion, located approximately 20 miles southeast of Butaritari Island.<sup>176</sup> By 0600 the transports had moved to the designated transport area, approximately 4 miles west of the island.<sup>177</sup>

The *Calvert's* boat crews were responsible for landing the 165<sup>th</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Landing Team on the southwest end of Butaritari Island at Red Beach 1.<sup>178</sup> The Red Beach landing areas are described:<sup>179</sup>

At the western end of the island the smoother sections of the beach are very widely separated from each other, and narrow, while jagged coral pinnacles make an approach to them an occasion for dexterous navigation. They are freer of heavy surf than the southern beaches and were believed during the planning for the attack on Makin to offer suitable access, regardless of the coral obstacles, to the island itself. The Navy, whose task it would be to convey the assault troops to the beaches, was satisfied that "landing boats could get ashore there at any time." The lagoon reef was determined to be no obstacle.

Shortly before 0800 the first wave began to organize at the Line of Departure. About this time the control vessels *Phelps* and *MacDonough* began to fire on the beaches.<sup>180</sup> Several minutes later the boats were given the order to proceed to the beaches and they crossed the Line of Departure at 0818. Sterling piloted the *Gig* following behind the first wave. Embarked in the *Gig* was the Beach Party. At approximately 0830 the first wave began to hit coral obstructions just off the beach.<sup>181</sup> Contrary to the Navy's assertion, the landing area selected turned out to be quite a challenge for the boat crews:<sup>182</sup>

Landings on RED Beach 1 did not, unfortunately, proceed on schedule. A hoist on the *Calvert* was disabled before the fourth tank was unloaded. The first wave therefore had but three tanks. The Alligators, tank lighters, and landing craft finished the journey on a course almost parallel to the swell, rising and falling about three feet as they drew near to the beach. The intervening reef was studded with coral boulders, rough and jagged lumps as much as two feet high, which left no passage from the edge of the reef, about 100 yards out, to high-water mark. Coming in on a rising tide, the several landing craft were unable to make the simultaneous touchdowns provided by the plans. Some slipped past most of the boulders and were held less than a boat's length (36 feet) from the water's edge, but many were broached, stranded, or forced to put to sea again. The tanks had been waterproofed for the landing, and rolled off the ramps into water which did not quite drown them out, but ahead of them the men struggled in swells breast deep, stumbled over the rocks and boulders, or sought cover at the edge of the beach.

RED Beach 1 was itself very rough above the waterline; it was usable for only 15 yards of width and rose swiftly from high tide mark to vegetation. Far from taking all six craft in each of the waves, it could not take more than three abreast near the shoreline, while for unloading supplies efficiently from even one boat, a channel had to be blasted. The first barges found great difficulty in withdrawing to give room for later assault waves to land. The Army officer in charge of the Alligators declined to divert them from their original inland assignments and put them to pulling stranded boats off the rocks, but the Navy furnished a crew, which operated one LVT in that service. The absence of enemy opposition to the landings at RED Beach 1 made it possible to meet the adverse beach conditions without suffering casualties.

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<sup>176</sup> [Capture of Makin](#), 33

<sup>177</sup> [Capture of Makin](#), 34

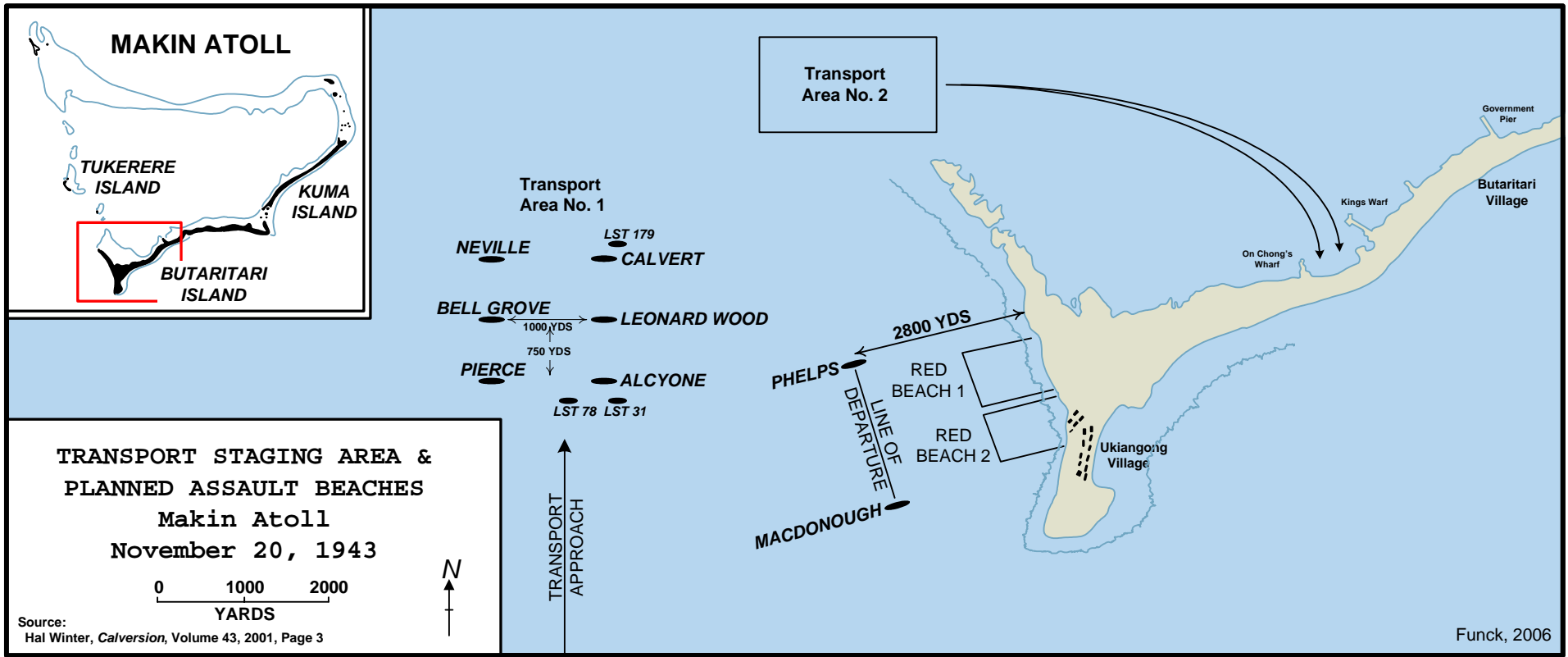
<sup>178</sup> [History of U.S.S. Calvert](#), 3

<sup>179</sup> [Capture of Makin](#), 10

<sup>180</sup> [Capture of Makin](#), 36

<sup>181</sup> [Capture of Makin](#), 40

<sup>182</sup> [Capture of Makin](#), 36-41





The carefully prepared sequence in the arrival of various elements of the assault and shore parties was thrown into confusion by the conditions arising at RED Beach 1. Although the assault forces of the first five waves got ashore and moved inland, or took up their duties at the shore, the fifth wave, which had been scheduled to land at 0857, actually completed its assignment at 1003. After the second wave had pushed in among the obstructions and reached the beach, the next three waves became intermingled.

Although the enemy offered no resistance to the steps taken to support and supply the attacking troops, the difficult off-shore landing conditions interfered seriously with the plans. These conditions first curtailed the use of RED Beach 1 and forced the diversion at 1300 of some boats to RED Beach 2. At 1030 the latter was operating satisfactorily but RED Beach 1 was able to handle only one small boat at a time.

By mid-afternoon, as the tide went down, RED Beach 2 was also the scene of congested boat traffic. Landing craft were stranded so thoroughly that it took the combined efforts of a bulldozer and an amphibian tractor to slide them into deeper water. No boats were sent to tire RED Beaches after 1700, and those as yet unloaded were then ordered into the lagoon for the night. From the *Calvert*, approximately one-tenth of the scheduled landings of supplies and equipment upon RED Beach 1 had been possible during the entire day.

Early in the course of the landings, natives of Makin began emerging from their hiding places in the brush; at first a chief and soon scores of all ages appeared on RED Beach 1. Some of the adults seemed to be still stunned by the bombardment, but the preliminary action had had surprisingly little effect and losses were taken calmly by the Survivors.

The beaches were so badly backed up that the Beach Master closed the beaches by the time Sterling was ready to assist in landing men and equipment. Many of the *Calvert's* boats were damaged that day. Typical damage included screw casualties, wrecked skegs,<sup>183</sup> damaged rudders and holes in the hull.<sup>184</sup> Several of the *Calvert's* boats were also swamped, almost to the point of sinking.<sup>185</sup> Sterling spent the remainder D-Day and all of D-plus-one engaged in salvaging operations along Red Beach 1 and 2. During the salvaging efforts some of the natives wandered down towards the beaches. This made for a tense situation at first. Sterling recalls that the boat crews weren't entirely sure if they were friendly or not. It quickly became apparent that locals meant no harm.

On D-plus two Sterling was selected to go to Tarawa to assist in the salvage of landing craft that had been damaged or had run- aground during the landings and fierce fighting. The scene on Tarawa was one of chaos and carnage. The Marines had experienced an unbelievable three-day fight. One account of the aftermath is as follows:<sup>186</sup>

I have never seen such a shambles – coconut logs everywhere, sheet iron, guns, ammunition, smashed tanks, equipment, shot-up cars, bicycles, and carts. In fact, everything that goes with war was scattered all over – pill boxes, tanks, traps, slit trenches dug up through concrete strong points in such numbers that they could not be counted. There were many Japs lying about ... all in an advanced state of decomposition. ... No one had any idea that the place was so thoroughly defended. Only battle-tested Marines could have taken that place.

Sterling was on Tarawa for seven days. During this time he spent most of his time in the vicinity of Red Beach 1 salvaging an assortment of landing craft. One of the craft that was salvaged was a Warming Tug, which was a barge outfitted with a crane. Sterling then used this craft to assist in the salvaging operation. While on Tarawa he also picked up a Japanese 6.5mm sniper rifle from the beach. Sterling provides his perspective on the event:

We lost a lot of boats on the initial waves at Makin. Some of us had boats on all sides of us, but we could work our way out and back to the ship. We were trying to salvage our own boats when

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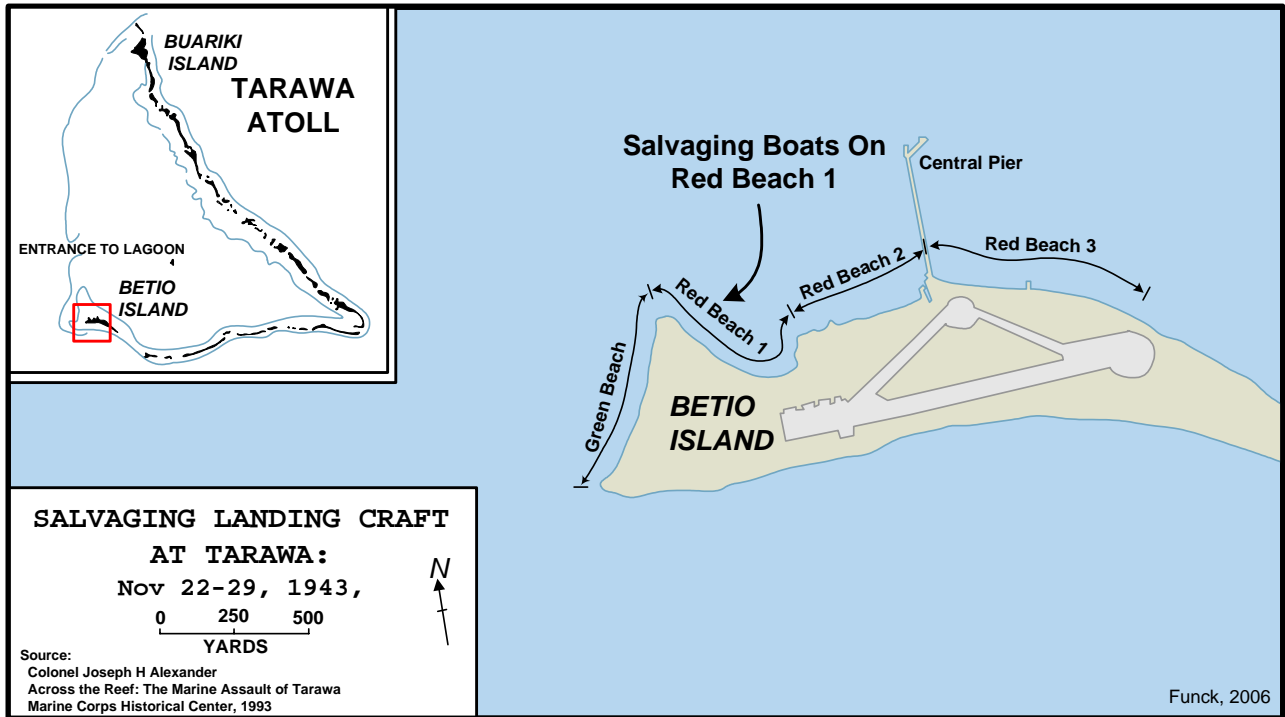
<sup>183</sup> Skeg: An arm extending to the rear of the keel to support the rudder and protect the propeller.

<sup>184</sup> *History of U.S.S. Calvert*, 4

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>186</sup> John A. Lorelli, *To Foreign Shores: U.S. Amphibious Operations In World War II*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1995. 177

we got pulled to go to Tarawa. Some of us were shipped, first via a landing craft and then on a smaller ship, to Tarawa to salvage landing craft. All of us were Coxswains, and I can only guess that they were pulling guys either because they thought that we were expendable, or that we were very qualified boat handlers. Some of the craft were easy to salvage, but others required special cranes to pull off of the coral. What happened was it didn't take as long to salvage the boats in our section of the beach, which was around Red Beach 1. So we got pulled ashore to help the shore party clear the beach. This didn't amount to much. We just stayed on the beach for several days. We didn't see any action. Eventually a ship took us back to rejoin the *Calvert*.



Warping tug that Sterling used to salvage landing craft at Tarawa.<sup>187</sup>

<sup>187</sup> From Sterling Funck's personal photograph collection.

On November 24<sup>th</sup> the *Calvert*, along with the other transports and escort ships, departed Makin bound for Hawaii.<sup>188</sup> On November 29<sup>th</sup> Sterling boarded a transport in Tarawa and rejoined the *Calvert* as it was en-route to Hawaii. On the return voyage several Japanese bombers harassed the convoy. Fortunately there were no serious incidents.<sup>189</sup>

Upon departure we began to be trailed by unidentified bogies. Contacts started at dusk for about three nights and securied (sic) after three or four hours each evening. Only one of those evenings did bogies close our force. They turned out to be Betties (sic) (a Japanese medium bomber, land based, and similar in performance to our B-26) – about five or more of them on that occasion.

When one or more planes began closing *Turner* executed a turn so as to provide maximum AA firepower on that target, our formation being in the standard circular AA defense disposition. They were not very aggressive and became discouraged, apparently, after receiving our ships' fire. So *Calvert* had fared very well for the entire operation, her first in the Pacific.

En-route to Hawaii one of the sailors aboard the *Calvert* sat on a duffle bag in which someone had stashed a bayonet. Captain Sweeney called a contraband search party. The search party literally tore the crews quarters apart looking for souvenirs. However, they didn't find Sterling's souvenir from Tarawa. He had hid it well:

Most guys running landing craft tried to salvage some sort of souvenir. I picked up a Japanese sniper rifle on Tarawa and snuck it back aboard ship. Then I had the carpenters build me a full-length wood box. Anyway, one guy got a hold of a bayonet and he stashed it in his sea bag, point up, unbeknownst to anyone, until a guy went to sit on the bag to play cards. Well that didn't go over too good with the ship's doctor or with the Skipper. So the Captain said that all souvenirs would be confiscated and thrown overboard. Well, I was a little on the smart side, so I hid mine between my bunk mattress and the bunk springs. You kept your dress blues between your mattress and your sea bag, which was laid out flat. That way you slept on them all the time and you kept them pressed. So I had this idea to hide it the rifle there. And it worked.

During the return voyage Sterling passed the written test for Boatswain Mate 1<sup>st</sup> Class. By this time in the war the Navy had established a rule that set a quota for the number of BM1C allowed per ship. Unfortunately for Sterling, the *Calvert* had met this quota. However, regulations allowed that Sterling could be rated as a BM1C Temporary. He was permitted to wear the rate and collect pay of a BM1C.

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<sup>188</sup> <<http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/books/wwii/makin/mak-fm.htm>> 129-130

<sup>189</sup> Calversion, Volume 41, 3, Information provided by Harry B. Stark

## Hawaii and San Diego

The *Calvert* arrived in Pearl Harbor on December 2<sup>nd</sup>.<sup>190</sup> Sterling spent a few days on leave and did as much sight seeing as he could fit into the few days he was off of the ship. On December 12<sup>th</sup> the *Calvert* departed Hawaii and sailed for San Diego. Seven days later, on December 19<sup>th</sup>, the *Calvert* docked at the San Diego Naval Base.<sup>191</sup>

Sterling brought the Jap rifle ashore, still concealed its wooden box, and mailed it home. While ashore Sterling visited with the family of one of the Chiefs he knew from the *Calvert*.<sup>192</sup> The Chief's wife was kind enough to mail an updated picture of Sterling to his parents.

Christmas day was a working day. A special service was held and a special meal was served at dinner, but the crew quickly returned to their activities. Preparations were underway for the upcoming Marshall Islands Campaign. Later in the day approximately twelve hundred Marines of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion Landing Team, 23<sup>rd</sup> Regimental Combat team, 4<sup>th</sup> Marine Division boarded on the *Calvert*.<sup>193</sup> For the next several days the *Calvert* conducted training exercises around San Clemente Island.<sup>194</sup> Following these exercises the *Calvert* returned to San Diego.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of January the *Calvert* departed San Diego and set course for Hawaii.<sup>195</sup> Shortly after departing San Diego work began to paint the *Calvert* in a diagonal striped blue, black, and white camouflage paint scheme.<sup>196</sup> Sterling helped out and ended up taking quite a fall while assisting in the work:

I crawled up the stack, you had a ladder that went up the stack, and you had a steel rim on the inside and I put the shackles up there to secure the bosun chair<sup>197</sup> and the painting scaffolds to run the cables down to the deck. The fumes almost got you. Before I had gone up, Tom Sawyer said "Funky, what ever you do watch it up on the stack." When I came down I went to test the rigging and, like a dumb shit, I left go of the line. I was stunned for a while, but I was ok.<sup>198</sup>

On January 21<sup>st</sup>, 1944 the *Calvert* arrived at Lahaina Roads, Maui Island, Hawaii. The crew refueled and re-provisioned the ship. The next day the *Calvert* departed Hawaii and headed for the Marshall Islands.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> History of U.S.S. Calvert, 4

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> The Chief's family lived in the area of Balboa Park.

<sup>193</sup> Calversion, Volume 12, 4, Information provided by M.P. (Mac) McIntyre, who also had helped to build the *Calvert* at Bethlehem Steel-Sparrows Point. Maryland.

<sup>194</sup> History of U.S.S. Calvert, 4

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> Calversion, Volume 37, 2, Information provided by Joseph Bushell

<sup>197</sup> Bosun's Chair: A short wooden plank, used to seat a man going aloft or over the side, suspended at the 4 corners with rope strapping which is seized together at a point app. 2' above the plank, and is then fastened to a line for hoisting or lowering.

<sup>198</sup> Years later Sterling would experience a number of back problems. He regrets not going to the ship's doctor to get checked out.

<sup>199</sup> History of U.S.S. Calvert, 4

## Operation Flintlock – Marshall Islands

The *Calvert* was assigned to the Northern Attack Force for Operation Flintlock. Flintlock was the first of several operations planned in the Marshall Islands group.<sup>200</sup> The capture of the Marshall Islands was a critical next step in the Pacific Campaign. The Island group offered U.S. forces bases for reconnaissance and combat staging needed to continue the march towards the Japanese islands. The mission of the Northern Attack Force was to capture Roi-Namur Islands of the Kwajalein Atoll.<sup>201</sup> The capture of Roi-Namur was important given that the primary Japanese airbase for the Marshall's group was on Roi.

### D-Day Roi-Namur Islands – Monday, January 31st, 1944

D-Day for Operation Flintlock was scheduled for Monday, January 31<sup>st</sup>, 1944. The Northern Task Force's operation consisted of three phases.<sup>202</sup> First, the capture of four offshore islands in the vicinity of Roi-Namur on January 31<sup>st</sup>. Second, land the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> Regiments, 4<sup>th</sup> Marine Division, on Roi-Namur on February 1<sup>st</sup>. Third, capture a series of smaller islands of the Kwajalein Atoll following the capture of Roi-Namur. The *Calvert* was assigned to reserve capacity and was expected to remain on call to execute on one of five possible contingency plans during the three phases of the operation.<sup>203</sup>

Roi-Namur are twin islands joined by a causeway and a narrow strip of breach. Roi, code-named Burlesque, had been stripped of vegetation and on it was a key Japanese airfield. Namur, code-named Camouflage, on the other hand was covered with thick vegetation. The 23<sup>rd</sup> Marines were assigned to Roi and would land at Red Beaches. The 24<sup>th</sup> Marines were assigned to Namur and would land at Green Beaches.

Unlike prior operations, where 'surprise' was considered to be the key tactical advantage a heavy pre-invasion air and sea bombardment would occur for this invasion. The primary targets, Roi-Namur, would receive heavy bombardment for two days in advance of the planned landings.<sup>204</sup> The lessons learned at Tarawa were taken to heart. Lorelli explains:<sup>205</sup>

Every known enemy position in the Marshalls would be hit with a mixture of long-range, plunging fire and point-blank, direct fire. Harassing fire would be maintained throughout the night of the 31 January-1 February, and full-scale neutralization fire reopened at first light. Twenty-five minutes before the landing craft hit the beach, the gunfire-support ships would blanket the beach area with a concentrated hurricane of high explosives. The heavy cruisers wouldn't cease fire until the boats were within 1,000 yards of the beach, the destroyers at 500 yards, and the newly converted LCI gunboats only when they could no longer avoid endangering the assault waves. Additional firepower would be available from Army and Marine artillery units scheduled to be landed on the four adjoining islands on 31 January. Finally, the bombardment was not tied to the clock; if the landing craft were late getting to the beach, gunfire support would be extended.

Another unique component of the assault on Roi-Namur was the plan to use LVTs for transporting the Marines onto the beaches. The LVT was a tracked amphibious vehicle that could drive over coral and onto the beach thus providing protection to the Marines. First, LCVPs would be used to transfer Marines from the transport ships to their designated LST. Embarked on the LSTs were the Marine's LVTs. Once the Marines were aboard their LVTs they would be launched from the LSTs. Once in the water the LVTs would form into assault waves in the staging area.<sup>206</sup> Meanwhile the LCVPs would circle back to the transports and prepare to transfer supplies and equipment to the beaches following behind the LVTs.

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<sup>200</sup> History of U.S.S. Calvert, 4

<sup>201</sup> Roi-Namur are the northern most group of islands in the Kwajalein atoll, a northern atoll of the Marshall Islands group.

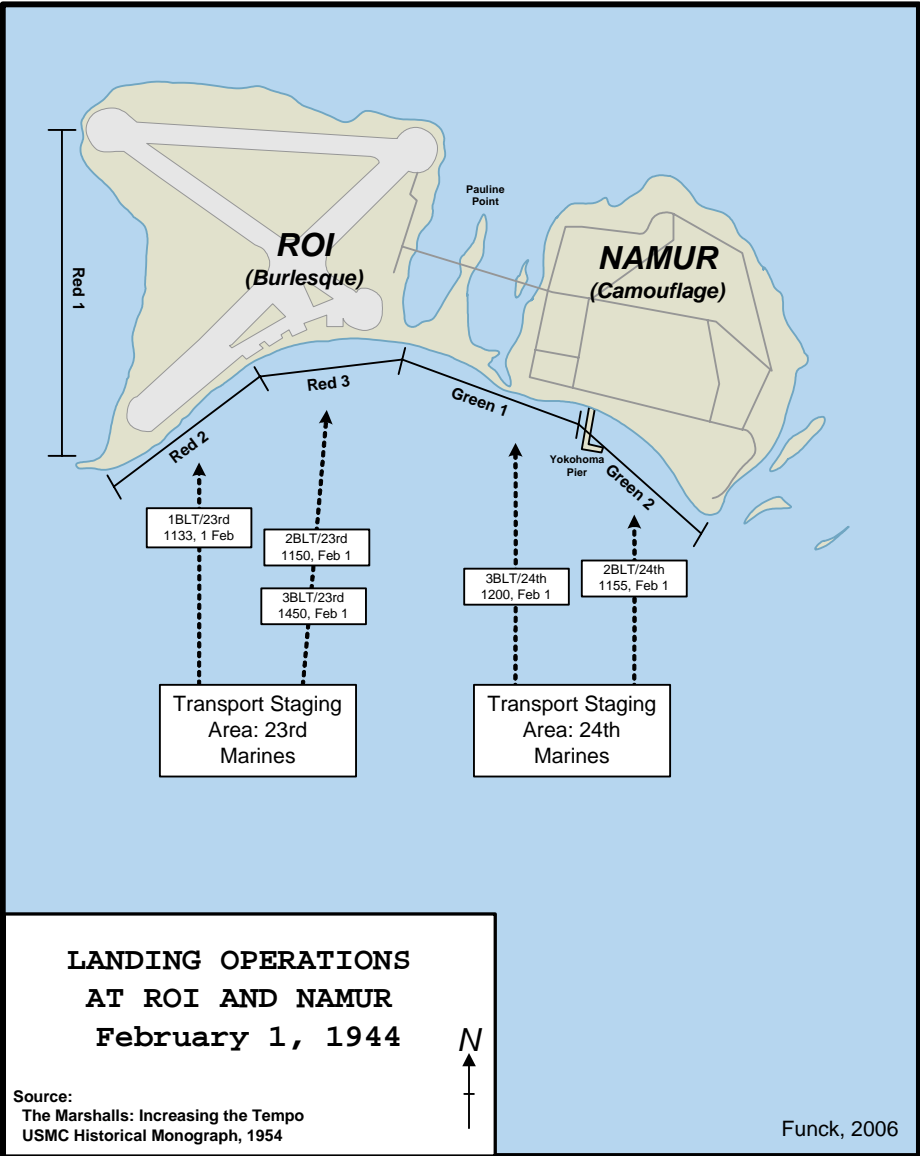
<sup>202</sup> Central Pacific Drive, History of the U.S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II, Part III, The Marshalls: Quickening the Pace, <<http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USMC/III/USMC-III-III-1.html>> 127.

<sup>203</sup> History of U.S.S. Calvert, 4

<sup>204</sup> Lorelli, 195

<sup>205</sup> Lorelli, 196

<sup>206</sup> Lorelli, 199



Shortly before 0100 on January 31<sup>st</sup>, the Northern Task Force reached the objective area around Roi-Namur<sup>207</sup>. The *Calvert* remained in reserve capacity throughout D-day as landings occurred at the surrounding islands and the primary targets were pounded in advance of the landings that would happen the next day. The *Calvert* spent the evening of D-Day maneuvering following a rainy and windy but generally uneventful day.<sup>208</sup>

On D-plus-1 the *Calvert* arrived south of the Roi-Namur beaches. Sterling's first assignment was to run the *Calvert's* rocket support craft. For reasons unknown to Sterling, Captain Sweeney replaced the temporary boat coxswain in favor of Sterling to pilot the craft in this invasion.<sup>209</sup> Sterling had previous opportunities to pilot the support craft, albeit in non-combat situations. When the weather was poor, this craft would at times be used to transport the Captain about. The support boat hung off of major boom in the *Calvert's* 1<sup>st</sup> division, and was slung outboard on starboard side.

The rocket support boat was formally designated Landing Craft, Support (Small) (Mark 1).<sup>210</sup> It was similar to an LCP in length and shape, however that is where the similarities ended. The steerage area of the craft was enclosed in a permanent steel cabin, with thin slits cut into the plating for visibility. A rack of 24 rocket tubes was mounted on each side of the cabin. The craft also had a shallower draft than a typical LCP/LCVP, which afforded the coxswain fewer worries about running aground on coral and sand bars. As the pre-landing air and sea bombardment ceased, and just prior to the landing of the first wave, the support craft would stand ready to engage enemy defensive positions on the beaches. A Support Boat officer augmented the standard crew of three enlisted men. This officer was qualified to load and fire the rockets and commanded the support craft.

Sterling witnessed the challenge that the amphibious tractors had in reaching the beaches as he was piloting the support boat as the first waves of LVTs hit the beaches. Enemy fire was coming from the beach while the landing craft and tractors were getting stuck on coral. The support boat officer ordered Sterling to position the boat perpendicular to the beach. The goal was to blast a passage in the coral obstructions with the rockets so that the LVTs had another option to reach the beach. Unfortunately they were too close to the beach, the rockets exploded harmlessly on the beach.

As the morning progressed many of the *Calvert's* boat crews assisted in rescuing Marines who were stuck in swamped tractors. Notwithstanding these challenges the invasion was going well, and the later waves had little enemy fire to be concerned about. The results of the pre-bombardment were staggering, with fifty-to-seventy five percent of Japanese defenders killed during pre-bombardment alone.<sup>211</sup>

In the afternoon hours of February 1<sup>st</sup> the *Calvert's* boat crews landed the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion on Roi at Red Beach 3 following behind the 23<sup>rd</sup> Marine 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> battalions.<sup>212</sup> The *Calvert's* crew discharged the Marines and 110 tons of cargo over the next twenty hours.<sup>213</sup> The following day, D-plus-2, the crew continued to off load supplies during which an additional 225 tons of equipment and cargo were discharged.<sup>214</sup> The *Calvert* spent thirteen more days anchored in the Kwajalein Lagoon supporting the operation.<sup>215</sup> As the operation wound down elements of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Marines re-embarked the *Calvert* for the return voyage to Hawaii.<sup>216</sup>

On the voyage home a Marine accidentally fired a round into one of the *Calvert's* water pipes. General Quarters was immediately sounded. The flooding was so bad that damage control parties from other divisions were called in to assist. Sterling and Tom Sawyer, members of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division damage control party, were involved in the initial response and follow-up repair.

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<sup>207</sup> History of U.S.S. Calvert, 4

<sup>208</sup> Lorelli, 199

<sup>209</sup> Sterling had previous opportunities to pilot the support craft, albeit in non-combat situations. When the weather was poor, this craft would at times be used to transport the Captain about. The support boat hung off of major boom in the *Calvert's* 1<sup>st</sup> division, and was slung outboard on starboard side.

<sup>210</sup> Calversion, Volume 21, 4

<sup>211</sup> Lorelli, 200

<sup>212</sup> <<http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USMC/III/USMC-III-III-1.html>>

<sup>213</sup> History of U.S.S. Calvert, 4

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

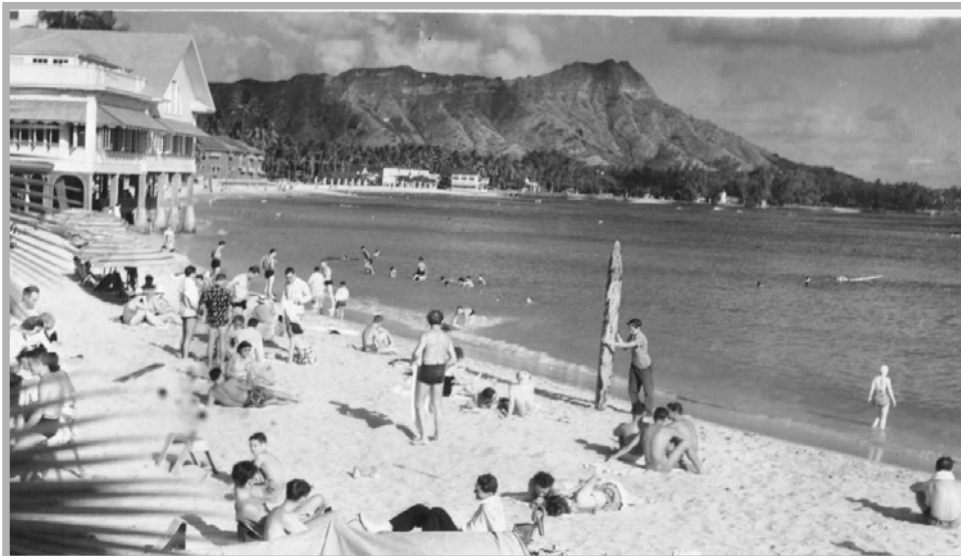
<sup>216</sup> Calversion, Volume 12, 4, Information Provided by M.P. (Mac) McIntyre.

## Reprieve To Hawaii

The *Calvert* arrived at Pearl Harbor on March 15<sup>th</sup>.<sup>217</sup> The crew spent the remainder of March participating in training exercises in, and around, the Maalae Bay area of Maui.<sup>218</sup> Throughout the month of April the *Calvert* spent time in the Pearl Harbor Navy Yard undergoing maintenance and repairs while the crew attended various service schools. During this time the crew had significant opportunities to relax and enjoy the recreational opportunities on the Island. Sterling admits that he wasn't an avid saver during his service. He spent what little money he had on site seeing adventures around the Hawaiian Islands.



View of Diamond Head, Oahu from the deck of the USS *Calvert* (above) and from Waikiki Beach (below).<sup>219</sup>



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<sup>217</sup> History of U.S.S. Calvert, 4

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>219</sup> From Sterling Funck's personal photograph collection.



As the end of April approached the crew re-focused their efforts in preparation for their next amphibious operation. Through the first-half of May the *Calvert* again participated in training exercises under simulated battle conditions near Maalaea Bay, Maui.<sup>220</sup> The *Calvert* returned to Pearl Harbor on May 20<sup>th</sup> and then departed for Eniwetok Island, Marshall Islands the next day.<sup>221</sup> In early June the *Calvert* arrived at Eniwetok Island,<sup>222</sup> Marshall Islands group. A few days later the *Calvert* departed for the Marianas.<sup>223</sup>

Although Sterling had not been home to visit his family in nearly a year, he did not get very homesick.

I have to say, that although a lot of guys often said they got homesick, I myself wasn't bothered much with that. I don't know if it was we because we were kept busy, or I just paid that much attention to other stuff. From the time you hit boot camp, and by the time you got aboard ship, you were so busy that you didn't have that much time to think about your family or being homesick. It is surprising how quickly 24 hours go by when you are working 23 hours out of the 24. So you rarely had time to think about things. You just had too much to do, between watches, deck work, and such. And when you did have a break out from work, you slept.

The *Calvert*, for some reason or another, had a pretty good setup. They always tried to get the news to you over the PA system. But, as far as the best news, when you used to hear that they had saved a bunch of guys off a sunk ship, or that an engagement was going well for the US forces. I don't think there was anything that demoralized the crew more than hearing that a ship has been sunk, and the loss of the crew. The news was in a way can be very distant. When you got it, it could have been way old because of radio block-outs and such. I must say that the best times were when mail call was announced on the ship.

Sterling's Mother kept him apprised of his family's wellbeing and of news from the home front by writing to him on a weekly basis. At times he also received care packages from the church that his parents attended. The contents were much coveted and almost always included a box Hershey's chocolate bars. In return Sterling kept in touch by writing letters to his mother every few weeks.<sup>224</sup> However, the contents of his letters were typically short and non-descriptive given that he was prohibited from providing any details about where he was or what he was doing. When the ship was at sea mail service did not occur on a regular basis. Many times weeks would go by and several of his letters would be sent out, and he would receive several letters from home, at the same time.

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<sup>220</sup> History of U.S.S. Calvert, 5

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> Eniwetok Island, part of the Eniwetok Atoll, was taken during Operation Catchpole, the final operation in the Marshall's Campaign.

<sup>223</sup> History of U.S.S. Calvert, 5

<sup>224</sup> Although Sterling's mother had kept all the letters that she received from him during the war, Sterling regrets now that he disposed of them after his mother's death.

## Operation Forager - Mariana Islands

The objective of the invasion of the Marianas, code named Operation Forager, was to further the United States' progress in the 'island hopping' approach to the Japanese mainland by capturing key islands in the Mariana archipelago<sup>225</sup>.<sup>226</sup> Operation Forager was organized as a three-part campaign. The first objective was Saipan Island, the second objective was Guam, and the final objective was Tinian Island.

On June 11<sup>th</sup> the invasion force departed Eniwetok and steamed west towards the Mariana Islands.<sup>227</sup> The *Calvert* was assigned to the Northern Attack Force, Task Force 52. The task force's objective was to capture the Island of Saipan, located approximately 150 miles northeast of Guam. Embarked on the *Calvert* were approximately 1300 Marines of Landing Team One, Combat Team 24, 4<sup>th</sup> Marine Division.<sup>228</sup>

### D-Day Saipan Island – Thursday, June 15<sup>th</sup>, 1944

The *Calvert's* initial task was to participate in a diversionary exercise off Tanapag Harbor with several other Transports and a Naval Fire Support Unit.<sup>229</sup> The Demonstration Group's objective was to divert the Japanese ground forces away from the primary landing areas located on the southwestern beaches of the island. Second, the *Calvert* was directed to "maintain readiness as 'priority Ship Number One' to debark troops and cargo 'on Call' off Saipan."<sup>230</sup> Third, the *Calvert* was to remain available to provide medical support duties by taking aboard wounded from the assault beaches. In the days prior to D-Day the crew spent time converting the *Calvert's* mess hall into a surgical ward. Also embarked were extra doctors and surgical equipment.

The Diversionary Group arrived off Tanapag Harbor in the early hours of Thursday, June 15<sup>th</sup>. By 0600 the landing craft were in the water,<sup>231</sup> however no Marines were embarked in the landing craft.<sup>232</sup> Then at approximately 0640<sup>233</sup> the group initiated the diversion: "The diversion was afforded realism by supporting naval gunfire ... as landing craft approached the beach to within 5,000 yards, circled for a few minutes, wheeled about, and returned to their ships. ... Landing craft drew no fire during the feint, and no activity was observed on the shore."<sup>234</sup>

By 0833 all of the *Calvert's* craft had returned to the ship. Approximately an hour later the *Calvert* departed Tanapag Harbor and set course to join up with the assault group Transport Group Baker.<sup>235</sup> At 1100 the *Calvert* joined the assault group. A few minutes later she received the command to "boat the landing team." By 1215 all *Calvert's* boats were debarked.<sup>236</sup>

The boat crews were on their way toward Blue Beach 1 through Charan Kanoa channel.<sup>237</sup> However, the *Calvert's* boats could not immediately enter the beach area due to considerable coral obstructions and heavy enemy artillery fire. This was the heaviest enemy fire that Sterling had yet to encounter during a landing. By the end of D-day "only a small portion of equipment which accompanied assault waves were unloaded."<sup>238</sup> Sterling recalls encountering heavy swells, strong tides, coral obstructions and heavy enemy fire all throughout the landings.

The Marines on the beaches weren't having an easy time either. The Japanese were putting up strong resistance. Casualties were heavy and much effort was expended getting the wounded off of the hostile beaches, into landing craft, and transported back to the transports for medical attention.

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<sup>225</sup> Archipelago: A large number of islands considered collectively in the same group.

<sup>226</sup> History of U.S.S. Calvert, 5

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> Captain John C. Chapin U.S. Marine Corps Reserve (Ret), Breaching The Marianas: The Battle for Saipan, World War II Commemorative Series, Marine Corps Historical Center, Washington D.C. <<http://www.nps.gov/wapa/indepth/extContent/usmc/pcn-190-003123-00/sec1.htm>>

<sup>232</sup> Major Carl W. Hoffman, USMC, Saipan: The Beginning of the End, Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1950, 48 <<http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USMC/USMC-M-Saipan/USMC-M-Saipan-2.html>>

<sup>233</sup> History of U.S.S. Calvert, 5

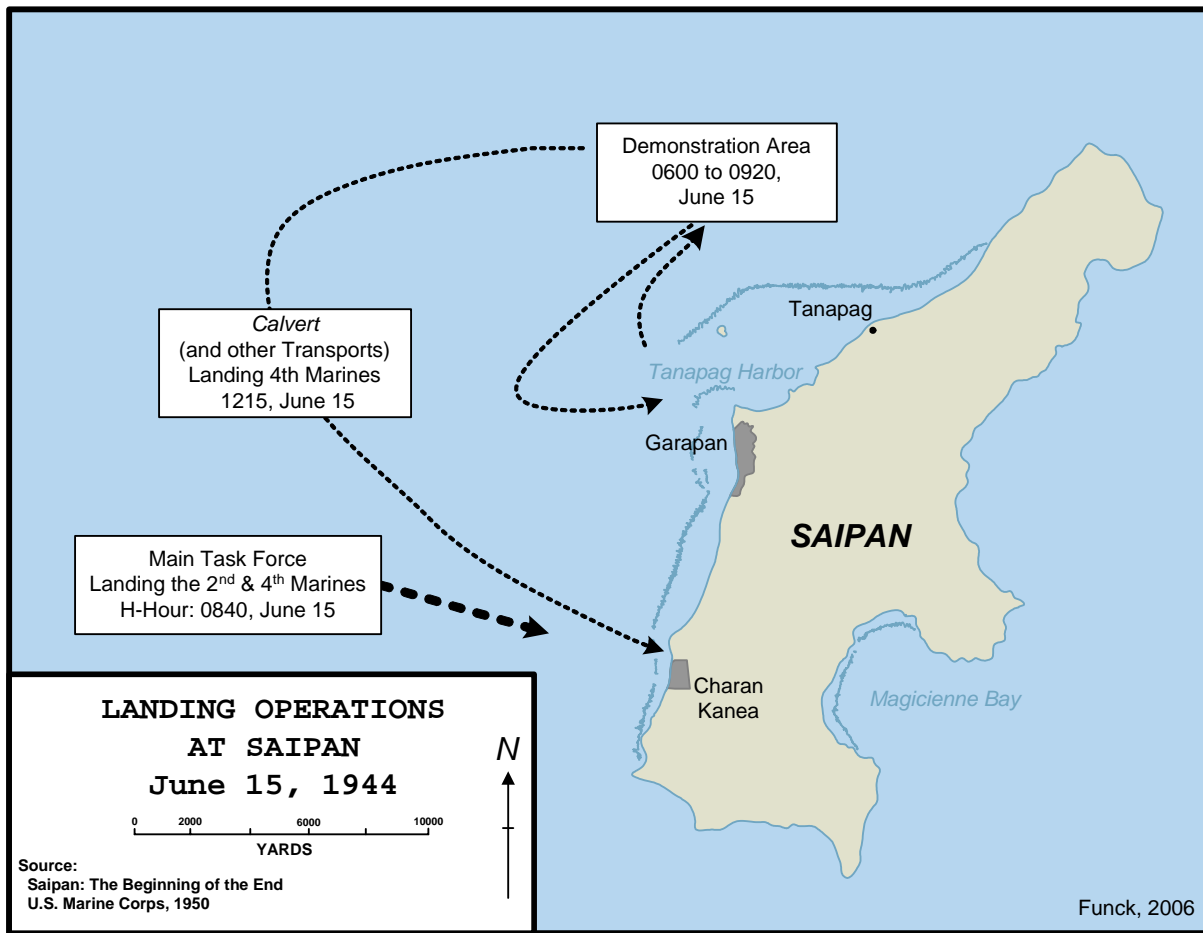
<sup>234</sup> <<http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USMC/USMC-M-Saipan/USMC-M-Saipan-2.html>>

<sup>235</sup> History of U.S.S. Calvert, 5

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.



In the early hours of D-plus one Sterling found himself in a rather uncomfortable situation with a team of Marines that he was to take ashore. Earlier in the evening on D-Day he was informed that he was to take over Joe McDonald's boat and assist in the transport of Marines to the beaches. He prepped the LCVP, however he was rushed and did not spend much time inspecting the craft. It was one of the few times that Sterling hadn't inspected a craft before taking charge of it.

Approximately thirty Marines boarded the boat at the rail. As the boat was just about to hit the water Sterling realized that there was a considerable breach in the hull at the waterline on the starboard side. He tried to get Lt. Osborne's attention and point out that the boat was damaged. However, he was ordered to continue on. As soon as the craft hit the water Sterling threw the throttle full forward. While the LCVP was still a considerable distance from shore it became clear to Sterling, and the Marine officer aboard, that they were in trouble. The Marines began to bail water with their helmets as the pumps worked their best to keep the craft afloat. The Marine officer ordered Sterling to return to the *Calvert*, but Sterling continued to run for the beach. Finally the Marine Lieutenant pulled his side arm and ordered Sterling back to the *Calvert*. Sterling obliged and turned the craft around.

The ship's carpenters took a considerable amount of time to repair the craft and Sterling didn't hit the water until well into the next day. Looking back he is amazed that the craft didn't sink. His one thought today is that he might have been able to have the Marines stuff a bunch of lifejackets into the hole to help keep some of the water out of LCVP.

The *Calvert* continued to transport equipment and supplies to the beaches for a week and a half following D-Day. During this time the *Calvert* also received numerous casualties. All told approximately 80 casualties were brought aboard the *Calvert*, and five deaths were recorded.<sup>239</sup> Some of these casualties included members of the *Calvert's* crew who were wounded during the landings. Thankfully none of the *Calvert's* crewmen were lost, although casualties were heavy for the Marines and many of the landing crews from other ships. All but a few of the casualties were eventually transferred to the hospital ships *Samaritan* (AH-10) and *Relief* (AH-1).<sup>240</sup>

Although the invasion force was being harassed by Japanese air attacks throughout the landings and unloading the enemy did not find many opportunities or successes. The Navy was prepared. They employed large scale screening defenses, including smoke laid down by landing craft.<sup>241</sup> Smoke screens were also employed to help obscure the visibility of the Japanese shore gunners. However, for the boat crews tasked with the job, it wasn't a pleasant experience. Sterling explains:

I would say I wouldn't want to recount how many times I didn't think I would make it back home. But probably the most I was ever scared was when running parallel to the beach laying smoke screens while troops were landing on the beaches. Some of the landing craft were rigged with smoke pots. In the coral off the beaches, fifteen-to-twenty percent of the craft never made it to the beach, they got stuck on the coral. The troops would have to get off in waist or shoulder deep water. They were sitting ducks. So you would be called in to lay a smoke screen. Of course running parallel to the beach isn't all that much better than being stuck on coral. You were a clear shot for the Japanese gunners. I think those were the times I was most scared during the invasions.

### **Reprieve to Eniwetok, Marshall Islands Group**

The *Calvert* departed Saipan on June 24<sup>th</sup> and arrived at Eniwetok Island on June 28<sup>th</sup>.<sup>242</sup> The crew spent the first half of July awaiting supplies for the next phase of Operation Forager while the *Calvert* underwent general maintenance and repairs. Fortunately for the crew not every moment of their time was spent working. On several occasions they held swimming parties. At a party held in celebration of July 4<sup>th</sup> each sailor received two cans of beer. Sterling sold his to the highest bidder for \$10 a piece. At another party Sterling almost drowned:

I used to have a good time at some of the parties, but I almost drowned one day. We were having a swimming party and guys were jumping off of the deck into the water, but I could never swim that good, so I crawled down on of the nets they had out for guys to get back aboard the ship. Well I slipped off of the net and fell flat on my back and knocked the wind out of me. The safety boat, you always two or three landing craft out with crews in them watching for somebody to get into trouble, fished me out. They kidded me about it the rest of the time aboard the ship.

Rested and ready to join back in the action the *Calvert* departed Eniwetok on July 19<sup>th</sup> heading west towards the Marianas.<sup>243</sup> The *Calvert* arrived off the Saipan a few days later.

### **Jig Day Tinian Island – Monday, July 24<sup>th</sup>, 1944**

In the early hours of Monday, July 24<sup>th</sup>, the task force departed Saipan and crossed the narrow three-mile channel to Tinian.<sup>244</sup> Aboard the *Calvert* were approximately 900 Marines of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 8<sup>th</sup> Regiment, 2<sup>nd</sup> Division.<sup>245</sup> The *Calvert* along with several other transports and fire support vessels were assigned to execute a diversionary maneuver the morning of Jig-Day (Jig being the name given to D Day at Tinian)<sup>246</sup> with the objective of diverting the Japanese ground forces away from the primary landing zones. The primary landing beaches, designated White

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<sup>239</sup> History of U.S.S. Calvert, 5

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

<sup>241</sup> Lorelli, 244.

<sup>242</sup> History of U.S.S. Calvert, 5

<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

<sup>244</sup> Major Carl W. Hoffman, USMC, The Seizure of Tinian. USMC Historical Monograph. Historical Section, G3-Division, Division of Public Information, Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps. 37 <<http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USMC/USMC-M-Tinian/USMC-M-Tinian-1.html>>

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> Richard Harwood, A Close Encounter: The Marine Landing on Tinian - Jig Day: Feint and Landing, Marines in World War II Commemorative Series, 1994 <<http://www.nps.gov/wapa/indepth/extContent/usmc/pcn-190-003127-00/sec2.htm>>

Beach I and White Beach II, were located along the northwestern of the island. The diversionary maneuver would take place along the southwestern beaches of the island near Tinian Town.<sup>247</sup>

The diversionary group arrived in Sunharon Harbor, the waters directly west of Tinian Town, shortly before dawn on the 24<sup>th</sup>. By 0615 the *Calvert* had lowered LCVPs to the water and Marines were embarking in the landing craft. Shortly thereafter Army and Navy aircraft began strafing and bombing runs while the fire support vessels, including the battleship *Colorado*, the light cruiser *Cleveland*, and four destroyers pounded Tinian Town and surrounding hills.<sup>248</sup>

At approximately 0730 the *Calvert's* boats made a first run towards the beaches. The landing craft drew strong fire from the Japanese coastal defense batteries:<sup>249</sup>

... the LCVPs ... from *Calvert* began their run toward the beach at Tinian Town, receiving heavy artillery and mortar fire from the shore. Admiral Hill, seeking to avoid casualties, ordered the boats to withdraw and reform. A second run started and immediately drew fire from the shore; several boats were sprayed with shell fragments. But they continued on to within 400 yards of the beach before turning back.

Although none of the *Calvert's* landing crews suffered casualties, nor were any landing craft lost, several landing craft carried back shrapnel as souvenirs.<sup>250</sup> Sterling remembers it as an intense experience, and he was glad he didn't have to land at Tinian Town that morning.

The demonstration group's fire support force also drew strong fire from the coastal defense batteries. The battleship *Colorado* took heavy fire and suffered heavy casualties.<sup>251</sup> As recounted by Robert Countryman:<sup>252</sup>

The order comes out that several boats will make a diversionary run to the beach but will not land. So we form up our circle off the bow of the ship until all boats are ready & then we form our V formation & head for the shore. When we get a certain distance from the beach we form our line & proceed all of a sudden all hell breaks out! The shells start bursting in the water all around us. Geysers of water & mud fly up into the air. We turn around & high tail it out of there at full throttle & a zigzag course. But! On station here is an older type battleship, painted black & white cameo. This ship is firing her starboard guns at the beach over our heads. This ship takes a direct hit on the deck, which starts a fire. The battleship makes a turn to starboard & opens up with her portside guns just like nothing happened to her. We, in the boats were so close to her that we had to get out of her way when she turned, or we would have been smashed like a matchstick. The fire was put out in short order & we returned to the ship. ... None of our boats were hit or anyone hurt-but I am sure we were all scared for a while. But then it was back to normal again.

The destroyer *Norman Scott* (DD-690) joined in to protect the *Colorado*.<sup>253</sup> The ship engaged the Japanese shore batteries, took considerable fire, and sustained damage on deck and on the bridge. The *Norman Scott's* Captain was killed and Lt. Commander Tully, formerly the *Calvert's* Gunnery Officer, assumed command of the ship.<sup>254</sup>

By 1000 the landing craft were back aboard the *Calvert*. A few minutes later the *Calvert* was ordered north to rendezvous in the primary transport staging area and to join in the support of the landings at the White Beaches.<sup>255</sup> At approximately 1515 the crews of the *Calvert's* landing craft were ordered to land the Marines.<sup>256</sup> The transfer of

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<sup>247</sup> History of U.S.S. Calvert, 6

<sup>248</sup> <<http://www.nps.gov/wapa/indepth/extContent/usmc/pcn-190-003127-00/sec3.htm>>

<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

<sup>250</sup> History of U.S.S. Calvert, 6

<sup>251</sup> Lorelli, 252

<sup>252</sup> Calversion, Volume 29, 3, Information provided by Robert Countryman. Original text quotes that this event took place at Saipan. However, this is more likely to have corresponded to the event cited by Lorelli.

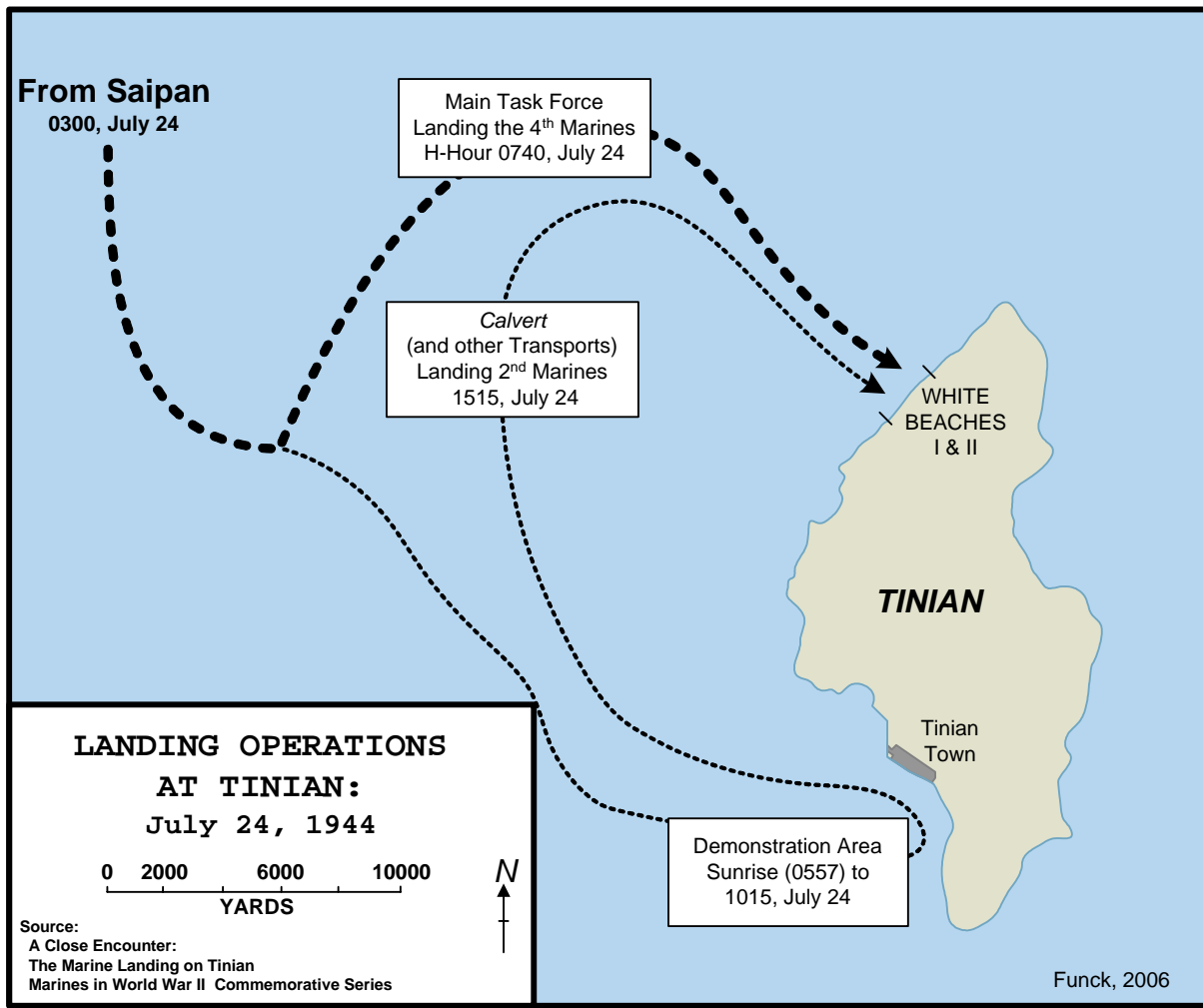
<sup>253</sup> <<http://www.nps.gov/wapa/indepth/extContent/usmc/pcn-190-003127-00/sec3.htm>>

<sup>254</sup> Calversion, Volume 10, 1982, page 6, provided by Charles Francher

<sup>255</sup> <<http://www.nps.gov/wapa/indepth/extContent/usmc/pcn-190-003127-00/sec3.htm>>

<sup>256</sup> <<http://www.nps.gov/wapa/indepth/extContent/usmc/pcn-190-003127-00/sec4.htm>>

the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division Marines and of their equipment began immediately. The transfer of men and equipment continued throughout the remainder of Jig-Day.



By June 28<sup>th</sup> the *Calvert* had completed the transfer of equipment to the beaches. The ship departed Tinian and set course east towards Eniwetok.<sup>257</sup> However, the weather and seas had worsened considerably. In fact, the weather had been miserable during the entire operation. Sterling did not know it at the time, but a typhoon was heading towards the Marshall Islands, from the southwest.<sup>258</sup> The crews aboard the transports were about to experience some of the worst weather during their service. Although the convoy was heading east, they could not escape the tail of the typhoon. For more than twenty-four hours rough seas and strong winds battered the *Calvert*. Sterling was nearly as scared during the storm as he had been during assaults on enemy beaches. Sterling describes the experience:

We got caught in a typhoon and the waves were that high that it tore off our life rafts, the 30-to-40 man life rafts way up on the side of the ship, tore them clean off, just ripped the welds and plates right off. And on the inside of the ship it tore the lockers loose from the stanchions<sup>259</sup>, knocked them to the floor, and it tore the bunks off of the hull.

<sup>257</sup> [History of U.S.S. Calvert](#), Page 6

<sup>258</sup> Major Carl W. Hoffman, USMC, [The Seizure of Tinian](#). USMC Historical Monograph. Historical Section, G3-Division, Division of Public Information, Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps. 92 <<http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USMC/USMC-M-Tinian/USMC-M-Tinian-3.html>>

<sup>259</sup> Stanchion: A vertical support member on a vessel.

## Japanese Prisoners Of War

The *Calvert* arrived at Eniwetok on August 1<sup>st</sup> and embarked 420 Japanese and Korean prisoners of war.<sup>260</sup> The POW's were quartered in hold number 3 on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> decks.<sup>261</sup> Unlike the German prisoners who had embarked on the *Calvert* via the gangway and fully clothed, the Japanese prisoners were stripped down to their skivvies<sup>262</sup> and were made to climb up the net ladders. As they came aboard, Sterling participated in a rigorous search of the prisoners.

I was on the search party this time. Now German prisoners came aboard the gangplank, and were fully clothed. But the Japanese prisoners were made to climb up the landing nets, unclothed except for skivvies. They were strip searched several times before they ever even got to the ship. But being in the search party aboard ship you still found contraband, pieces of glass, anything they could get a hold of they would. But honestly, the biggest thing I was scared of was the trigger-happy Marines standing on the upper deck. But anyhow, this one guy came aboard, and I signaled to him to spread his arms and legs so I could do the search. He said, "May I ask you something" or something to that effect. I said "What", cause he could speak better English than I could. He said "I have a locket here of my wife and children. Would you take it from me so it don't get thrown away." How he ever got it aboard, where he hid it, I'll never know because it was about 3 inches by 2 inches, or bigger. So I called the officer over that was on duty for the search party, and I showed him the locket that the Japanese fella still had in his hand. The officer said "Yeah, you can take it from him, but first he has to open it for you." You see, they would have everything rigged as a bobby trap. He told him to back away and open it. I was allowed to keep it.

That Japanese prisoner was very appreciative that the picture of his wife and daughter didn't get discarded. The guy's story was that he graduated from the University of Chicago and had gone home to Japan to bring his wife and children back to the United States. Before he was able to return to the United States the war broke out. He was conscripted and sent to the Marianas. I know I brought that locket back home from the war, but to this day I don't know where it is, or whom I would have given it to.<sup>263</sup>

Once onboard the *Calvert* the prisoners' experience improved considerably. Sterling remembers that Captain Sweeney treated the prisoners quite well. Much to the consternation of the ship's crew Captain Sweeney held the ship's store of ice cream in reserve strictly for the prisoners. The prisoners were also given frequent visits topside, weather and circumstances permitting.<sup>264</sup>

Not all of the Japanese prisoners survived. Two Japanese prisoners died while in sickbay.<sup>265</sup> Sterling was assigned the task of sewing up the bodies for burial at sea:

There were several who were in sickbay. Well somehow or another two of the Japanese prisoners died one night. And I'll use the word died, because I can't prove it any other way, and neither could anyone else at the time. I can distinctly remember that there were two of them, although I think some guys only thought there was one.

I was assigned the job of sewing them up with a five-inch shell between their legs. That is what you did for burial at sea, put them in a canvas bag and usually had a 5-inch shell between the legs to serve as weight to put them to the bottom. But anyhow, I was the one who had to sew the men up for burial at sea. Sickbay was in our division at that particular time, and for some reason I was selected for this duty.

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<sup>260</sup> History of U.S.S. Calvert, Page 6

<sup>261</sup> Ibid.

<sup>262</sup> Skivvies: Underwear

<sup>263</sup> Sterling's youngest son, Steve, clearly remembers seeing the locket when he was a boy.

<sup>264</sup> History of U.S.S. Calvert, Page 6

<sup>265</sup> Some members of the crew, who attended the 1996 *Calvert* Reunion, held in Lancaster PA, remembered only one dead Japanese prisoner.

It was an eerie feeling. I pitied them. Normally when you were shooting at someone from a ship, or someone was shooting at you on the ship, it was not a personal thing. If I can make that plain enough to understand, it wasn't as though there were two guys standing on a corner having a street brawl. They were shooting at us, we were shooting at them.

But then when you are selected for a duty like that, I'd say that was one of the most meaningful, serious, moments that I had put in during the war. That put it at a personal relationship as far as I was concerned. Now I imagine for someone in the Army or Marines that was in face-to-face combat, well they would have a different perspective. But from a ship, and I have never talked to a sailor, or anybody who was on a ship in combat, including some that had been on ships that were sunk, such as Gilgallan. It wasn't personal to him until he found himself floating in the water. You felt like it was just machine against machine. But I sort of picked up that feeling, not of resentment, and yet it was sort of resentment because this guy was a Japanese soldier, but also a feeling of pity.



## Last Days On The USS Calvert

The *Calvert* arrived in Pearl Harbor on August 10<sup>th</sup>. Although he did not know it at the time, Sterling was quickly approaching separation from *Calvert*. Sterling explains the situation:

At that time they had a rule, or sort of an unofficial rule, that if you had been involved in five major landings as a coxswain you would be transferred to what they considered to be lighter, or less hazardous duty. It didn't make a lot of sense to most of us. But then a lot of stuff didn't make sense to us. Most guys would have preferred to stay aboard rather than get tossed around in various temporary positions.

The prevailing assumption was that an older member of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division would be the choice pick for transfer. Sterling assumed that Andy Surdyka was the most likely candidate. However, Sterling found out that it would be he who would be transferred. His guess is that Surdyka was able to convince one of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division officers to allow him to stay aboard. Although disappointed with having to leave the *Calvert*, Sterling looks back with favor on his experience aboard APA-32: “the *Calvert* got around a good bit. I wish I could have stayed on until it got to Japan. But hey, that’s the way the cookie crumbles.”

Although he is not positive about the date it is likely that August 24<sup>th</sup> was Sterling’s last day aboard the *Calvert*. Official records show that Sterling was on leave between August 25<sup>th</sup> and October 30<sup>th</sup>. Sterling made positive impressions on a good number of officers during his service aboard the *Calvert*. As he was preparing to leave, Lt. Marks, who Sterling always figured hadn’t like him, offered him a job post-war with his family’s pineapple plantation in Hawaii. Lt. Brunswick, the Senior Division Officer for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division, gave Sterling his personal copy of *Knight’s Modern Seamanship* book.<sup>266</sup>

Shortly after Sterling departed the *Calvert* soldiers of the 24<sup>th</sup> Amphibious Corps, Third Battalion, 17<sup>th</sup> Regiment, 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, U.S. Army, boarded the *Calvert*.<sup>267</sup> The days following through to September 3<sup>rd</sup> the *Calvert* participated in training exercises around the Maalaea area of Maui Island in preparation for the Yap operation.<sup>268</sup> On September 5<sup>th</sup>, Captain Ronald T. Strong relieved Captain Sweeney.<sup>269</sup> The *Calvert* remained at Pearl Harbor until September 15<sup>th</sup> at which time it departed for the Yap operation.<sup>270</sup> The *Calvert* was assigned to the Eastern Task Force, which while en-route to Yap was re-directed for the Leyte operation.<sup>271</sup>

Looking back Sterling can recall a few other amusing situations that arose while he served in the Pacific. For instance, had he not transferred back to the Damage Control Party when the *Calvert* first entered the Pacific he likely wouldn’t be able to claim that he once tossed the Chaplain Elliot’s shoes overboard:

The officers’ quarters were right near our berthing quarters. One night in the Pacific, it was a hot sticky night. I done what I wasn't supposed to do, and he was doing what he wasn't supposed to do. In other words you had rules of the road. When General Quarters sounded everyone on the starboard side went forward, and everyone on the port side went aft. So if you were on the opposite side of the ship from your station when General Quarters sounded, then you had to run up one side and down the other to get to your station. Well I slept right at the hatch, on the starboard side, and I could scoot right out the hatch and run across the width of the ship and I was at my battle repair station on the port side.

Of course, General Quarters sounded. I went flying out the hatch and tripped ass over tin cup and about broke my neck. I got up, felt around and there was a pair of shoes lying there. I picked them up and tossed them overboard. Here it was that Chaplain Elliot couldn't sleep, so he got up and propped up on one of the boat cradles and took off his boots to get comfortable. He must have dosed off, 'cause when general quarters sounded he jumped up, and about that time heard someone

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<sup>266</sup> Sterling’s youngest son, Steve Funck, has possession of this book.

<sup>267</sup> *History of U.S.S. Calvert*, Page 6

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*

fall and then do a little cussing. He couldn't find his shoes. They had disappeared. It didn't take him long to realize that it was me who tossed them. But he was a nice guy and he didn't give me a hard time about it.

## Temporary Duties Stateside

Sterling spent the remainder of the War serving in a variety of temporary assignments. His first assignment was at the Terminal Island Receiving Station, San Pedro California.<sup>272</sup> Shortly after his arrival, he was re-assigned to the Small Craft Training Center, also located at Terminal Island. His primary job while at Terminal Island was to train boat crews in LCVPs and LCMs. Sterling also spent time serving on Shore Patrol, the Navy's version of military police.

After a brief time at Terminal Island Sterling was transferred to the USS *Facility*. The *Facility* was a minesweeper. It was a relatively small ship with a capacity of approximately one hundred crewmembers, one-quarter that of the *Calvert's* crew.<sup>273</sup> The ship and crew were undergoing a shakedown period in the waters surrounding San Pedro at the time of Sterling's assignment to the ship. At that time there was a skeleton crew of no more than 15. Sterling was the senior Boatswain Mate and reported directly to ship's Sweeping Officer.

Sterling had gained experience in rigging for mine sweeping operations while aboard the *Calvert* as part of his training to earn the qualification for Coxswain. Aboard the *Facility* he was the Leading Sweeping Man. His job was to train and supervise the three junior sailors whose job it was to rig for, and run, mine sweeping operations. He reported directly to the ship's Sweeping Officer. Sterling describes the primary sweeping method he participated in while aboard the *Facility*:

When you were deliberately sweeping you would run from a compressed circle pattern outward at a speed of about five or six knots. There was a sweeping boom on each side of the ship and a cable ran from the bow of the ship to the end of each sweeping boom. The sweeping cable was in the water, about even with the keel<sup>274</sup> of the ship. Then there was a paravane at the end of each cable that was designed to cut a mine's cable when it was caught.<sup>275</sup> You would watch the behavior of the sweeping cable to know when a mine was caught. Usually the mine cable would be cut by the paravane and then the mine would float to the surface. Then you would order the appropriate crewmember to shoot at the mine to detonate it. If it happened in shallow water where you weren't supposed to detonate the mine, you would have to take the detonators out. But I was lucky enough to not have to do that type of work.

The *Facility* departed San Pedro in early February 1945 and arrived in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii on February 17<sup>th</sup>.<sup>276</sup> Sterling recalls that while he was aboard the *Facility* he participated in the discovery and detonation of between three and four mines.

Shortly after arriving in Hawaii Sterling was transferred to a new temporary assignment at Mine Assembly Base 128, Pearl Harbor. Sterling's primary duties included mine assembly and disassembly. During this assignment Sterling had the unfortunate job of working for a Chief who often was under the influence of alcohol during working hours. On several occasions Sterling refused to work along side the Chief. Apparently many of the Chief's reports had done this in the past and no charges were pressed.

Sterling spent much of his spare time sight seeing, notably on the island of Hilo. He also worked with a bunch of other Navy guys grading an area and preparing a playing field where they could play ball. Just about the time that the ball field was nearing completion Sterling was again transferred. However prior to his departure he was able to play ball with Johnny Mize, who went on to play for the St. Louis Cardinals after the War and was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1981.

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<sup>272</sup> During WWII, the Terminal Island Dry Dock facility was primarily used to repair Naval ships. It is located a few miles east of Long Beach California. For more information on Terminal Island see: California State Military Department, The California State Military Museum, Naval Station, Long Beach (Naval Operating Base, Long Beach; Naval Operating Base, San Pedro, Long Beach Naval Shipyard) <[www.militarymuseum.org/NOBLongBeach.html](http://www.militarymuseum.org/NOBLongBeach.html)>

<sup>273</sup> See Appendix D for more information on the U.S.S. *Facility*.

<sup>274</sup> Keel: The lowest longitudinal strength member of a ship, which runs the fore and aft length of the ship.

<sup>275</sup> Paravane: A device equipped with sharp teeth and towed alongside a ship to cut the mooring cables of submerged mines.

<sup>276</sup> Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships Online: <<http://www.hazegray.org/danfs/mine/am233.htm>>

His next assignment was at the US Naval Hospital #10, Pensacola, Florida. He boarded a transport in Hawaii and upon arrival in San Diego he took a train across country to Pensacola. His primary duty at the Hospital was to guard German prisoners of war. The prisoners provided work detail for the Hospital grounds. Sterling believes that they received approximately a quarter a day for their labor. While on this assignment Sterling ran into a several German prisoners who had been on board the *Calvert* on the return voyage from Oran to Norfolk in the Summer of 1943.

Sterling was reassigned to the Naval Reserve Base at New Orleans (RS NRB NOLA) in late July. When Sterling arrived in New Orleans he was re-assigned to an Attack Cargo ship, the USS *Hidalgo*.<sup>277</sup> Here again he would help prepare a newly commissioned ship for wartime service. The *Hidalgo* sailed to Galveston. From there it sailed to Corpus Christi. While in Corpus Christi the *Hidalgo* was outfitted and rigged in preparation for a shakedown cruise off the coast of Texas. Sterling oversaw rigging of the ship, which took a few days of solid effort by a large team. In early August, shortly before the beginning of the *Hidalgo's* shakedown cruise, Sterling took leave of absence.

In mid-August Sterling returned to Corpus Christi and learned that he would be returning to the Pacific for permanent assignment back on an Attack Transport. He would be rejoining the fight against the Japanese. Sterling had few expectations that that he would escape harm during these upcoming operations, which were likely to be against the Japanese Islands.

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<sup>277</sup> See Appendix E for more information on the U.S.S. *Hidalgo*.

## The War Ends

Sterling boarded a passenger ship on August 13<sup>th</sup> and sailed for Pearl Harbor. The next day the Japanese formally surrendered. When he arrived in Hawaii, he found out for certain that he would be heading home. He had enough points to be discharged. A few days later he boarded an LST and headed home. Upon arriving in San Diego he took a train to the east coast. He arrived at Brainbridge, Maryland in early October. He took leave for the remainder of October to spend time with his family in Palmyra thinking through his options for the future.

Sterling had a decision to make. He could return to civilian life or re-enlist. It was a difficult decision. If he chose to re-enlist he would likely be permanently promoted to BM1C, or even possibly Chief, Temporary. Many of the older Boatswain Mates and Chiefs were approaching retirement age and the Navy was interested in retaining as many experienced sailors as possible. On the other hand he was very concerned that the Navy would return to the way of the "Old Navy" in the post-war years. He didn't like the prospect of always being looked down upon by older enlisted guys.

Of course I was too young for what I got into. My promotions came a lot faster than they normally would have in the peacetime Navy. As Leading Boats'n Mate, most of the guys that I dealt with, were BM2C and BM3C, who were much older than I was. Some had 15 years in and here I was with 4 years in. The old Boats'n Mate in the deck division was usually a dumb rummy, a boozehound. That was their noted reputation. They'd get busted down in rank as quickly as they would get promoted. So when a young punk like me come along they could really rough it up and give you a hard time. It was a lot of hard work.

Sterling didn't want to carry around the reputation of an assumed drunken sailor. Those that knew him personally would have never considered him as such. Sterling ultimately chose to return home. He separated, earning an Honorable Discharge, on Armistice Day,<sup>278</sup> November 11th, 1945.

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<sup>278</sup> World War I ended with the implementation of an armistice [temporary cessation of hostilities—in this case until the final peace treaty, the Treaty of Versailles, was signed in 1919] between the Allies and Germany at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of November 1918. November 11<sup>th</sup> 1919, President Wilson proclaims the first Armistice Day with the following words: "To us in America, the reflections of armistice Day will be filled with solemn pride in the heroism of those who died in the country's service and with gratitude for the victory, both because of the thing from which it has freed us and because of the opportunity it has given America to show her sympathy with peace and justice in the councils of the nations..." The original concept for the celebration was for the suspension of business for a two-minute period beginning at 11 A.M., with the day also marked by parades and public meetings. On June 1, 1954 President Eisenhower signs legislation changing the name of the legal holiday from Armistice Day to Veteran's Day. The History of Veteran's Day. <<http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/faq/vetsday/vetshist.htm>>

## After The War

Sterling returned home to Palmdale and promptly found work driving bread truck for Ruhl's Bakery. In March 1946 he met Luella Pierce. They married on September 14<sup>th</sup> of that same year. They settled in Enola, Pennsylvania where they raised two sons, Gary and Steve. Time passed by quickly.

Sterling had formed strong friendships with guys in the 2<sup>nd</sup> deck division. However, he had limited contact with them after the war.

I am sort of negligent in not keeping in closer correspondence with a few of the guys. But even though you don't keep in contact with everyone of them, it is sort of hard to describe, you still have the fond memories of them, and the bond that hangs around. I don't think you'll ever lose the bond formed with them. Little things will come up to remind you of them every once and a while.

In the late 1980's Sterling learned about the *Calversion*, a semi-annual newsletter dedicated to the crewmembers of the *Calvert*. Through that publication he was able to touch base with a few of the guys he had served with during the war. In September of 2000 he attended a reunion in nearby Lancaster for crewmembers who had served aboard the *Calvert*. There he met up with several of the guys he had served with while on the *Calvert*. Lots of stories were shared about Captain Sweeney, their time in the Pacific, the Japanese prisoners, and so on. There was also plenty of kidding Sterling about his two cracked gigs. Sterling also was able to catch up with John Zdanowicz. At this time John was 84, and he was still tending 120 lobster traps off the coast of Maine. Although John couldn't place him at first, Sterling jogged John's memory by reminding him that they had swapped money belts on many occasions.

Growing up, Sterling couldn't have dreamed that he would visit and see the world outside of central Pennsylvania. His time with the Navy took him all over the world. To this day he is amazed that he came out of the experience no worse for wear:

I guess probably the first and second invasions probably were the two most serious to me at first, given that they were my first two invasions. Of course there was always the fear of being torpedoed, or a fire breaking out on the ship. I was never a good swimmer. In fact I could have qualified as a non-swimmer. I always had a fear of getting torpedoed and not being able to get off the ship, or not being able to get to a life raft. I'd also have to say that getting trapped on the ship, or drowning, were always top of mind.

Sterling looks back with favor. Although some guys came out of the war with a relatively large bank account, Sterling has an untold number of memories and stories covering his many adventures during the War. Hawaii in particular was his favorite location. He also enjoyed his visits to New York City and San Diego. Every chance he got he would step out to see his surroundings:

Of course I was one to take advantage of going anywhere I could when I got on liberty. I didn't have any money when I went in and I had less yet when I got out, cause I blew it as fast as I got it. When we'd pull into Pearl, I'd go over to one of the other islands if I could get a day or so off.

Sterling also has deep reflections of his time during the War:

I never intended to be in the Navy, but after things were said and done I am glad I was. I wouldn't trade all the schooling I missed for the experience I had in the Navy. I guess I have to think that, and maybe this sounds like bragging but it's not, there are memories that I cherish 'cause I'm one of the lucky ones to come back. Aside from the seriousness of the battles themselves and the consequences of the battles I don't think I could sit here and honestly say I regretted being in the service. But likewise I couldn't say I don't regret knowing that you've either caused the death of someone else, or been involved in it. So, I don't know, I guess at age 80, I question myself - not was it right or was it wrong, but you have feelings that are hard to convey.

I think as far as events as Chris has [in this document], he's done a fine job of it. But I don't think I, or anyone I've talked to have really been able to convey the true feelings that are involved in seeing another ship being hit or sunk, or a landing craft getting stuck on the beach with 30 or 40 guys in it, not knowing if they are going to make it. It is really hard to put into words what the true feeling is unless you actually go through it. I can feel for it for the guys who are in the military today, who may not have the full support of the country. I am not saying that war is right, but it is not right to not support the troops.

I think most guys today, when they are asked something about World War II, have a feeling that they guard what they are say for fear of it being taken as bragging or self praise. I really feel that when I talk to older guys, that is the way it is.

## Appendix A: Summary of Sterling's Naval Service

### Rates & Ratings

#### **Apprentice Seaman (AS)**

Earned this rate at the time of graduation from Boot Camp in mid-January 1942. Retained this rating for a short time while onboard the *Harry Lee*. Responsibilities included knowing Naval drill duties and basic deck work such as knots, painting, etc. Initial primary and secondary duties were general deck work. Assigned secondary duty as Bowhook in the Captain's Gig.

#### **Seaman 2<sup>nd</sup> Class (S2C)**

Earned this rate several weeks after boarding the *Harry Lee*, sometime in February or March of 1942. Given first permanent assignment as Captain's Orderly. Retained secondary duty as Bowhook in the Captain's Gig.

#### **Seaman 1<sup>st</sup> Class (SC1)**

Earned this rate in September or October 1942, shortly before the invasion of North Africa. Although not yet a Coxswain, Sterling was given full responsibility for the Captain's Gig.

#### **Coxswain (COX) & Boatswain Mate 3<sup>rd</sup> Class (BS3C)**

Earned the rating of Coxswain and the rate of Boatswain Mate 3<sup>rd</sup> Class in late 1942, shortly after arriving back in the States following the North African invasion. Primary duty remained care of the Gig. When the ship was underway and the Gig was cradled, primary duty shifted to Messenger of the Watch. The Messenger of the Watch stood on the bridge (while underway), or on the quarterdeck (in port), delivering messages and carrying out duties as directed from senior officers on the deck.

#### **Boatswain Mate 2<sup>nd</sup> Class (BS2C)**

Earned this rate in August 1943, shortly arriving back in the States following the Sicilian invasion, while underway in the Pacific. Primary duty remained care of the Gig. When the ship was underway and the Gig was cradled, primary duty shifted to Boatswain Mate of the Watch. As Messenger of the Watch, stood while under way, was responsible for communicating messages to the crew, and reported to the Officer of the Deck. The badge of the BM2C was the Boatswain Pipe. Sterling used this pipe while he stood as Boatswain Mate of the Watch to call the crew to attention to receive orders from the Officer of the Deck.

#### **Boatswain Mate 1<sup>st</sup> Class (BS1C) - Temporary**

Earned this rate in late November or December of 1943, following his participation in the Gilberts Island operation.

#### **Separation from the Navy**

Sterling separated from the Navy on November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1945. Had Sterling instead reenlisted, he would have become permanent Boatswain Mate 1<sup>st</sup> Class. His jump to Chief would have occurred a short time later.



## Awards & Decorations

### **American Campaign Medal**

Sterling was awarded the American Theater of Operations for his service with the U.S. Navy during the war.

### **European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal**

Sterling was awarded the European-African-Middle-Eastern Campaign Medal for his service participation in the European-African-Middle Eastern Theater. Sterling received two bronze service stars for this ribbon for his participation in the following operations:

- Operation Torch, Invasion of Algeria-French Morocco: November 8, 1942
- Operation Husky, Invasion of Sicily: July, 10, 1943

### **Asiatic-Pacific Area Campaign Medal**

Sterling was awarded the Asiatic-Pacific Area Campaign Medal for his service participation in the Asiatic-Pacific Theater of Operations. Sterling received two bronze service stars for this ribbon for his participation in the following operations:

- Operation Galvanic, Invasion of Makin Island: November 20, 1943
- Operation Flintlock, Invasion of Roi-Namur Island: January 31, 1944
- Operation Forager, Invasion of Saipan Island: June 15, 1944
- Operation Forager, Invasion of Tinian Island: July 24<sup>th</sup>, 1944

### **World War II Victory Medal**

Sterling was awarded the World War II Victory medal for his service in the US Armed Forces during World War II.

### **Good Conduct Medal**

Sterling was awarded the Good Conduct Medal for his outstanding performance and conduct during 4 years of continuous active enlisted service.

### **Navy Unit Commendation Medal**

Members of the USS *Calvert* were awarded the Navy Unit Commendation Medal for distinguishing themselves by outstanding heroism in action against the enemy subsequent to December 6<sup>th</sup>, 1941. The Chief of Naval Personnel awarded this commendation to members of the *Calvert*'s crew who served during World War II on May 9<sup>th</sup>, 1949.<sup>279</sup>

### **Combat Action Ribbon**

Sterling is eligible to receive the Combat Action Ribbon for his service aboard the USS *Calvert* during World War II.

### **Golden Shellback**

Sterling earned the unofficial title of Golden Shellback, and appropriate certificates, for his participation in the crossing of the equator at the International Date Line, the 180<sup>th</sup> meridian, on November 15<sup>th</sup>, 1943.

Sterling received the following documentation for this event:

- Domain of Neptunus Rex - Shellback Certificate
- Imperium Neptuni Regis - Shellback Certificate
- Wallet-sized Shellback Certificate
- Sacred Order of the Golden Dragon Certificate
- How The U.S.S. *Calvert* First Crossed The Line

All of the abovementioned awards, decorations, certificates, and documents are in the personal collection of Christian Funck. The whereabouts of Sterling's wallet-sized Shellback certificate is unknown.

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<sup>279</sup> Calversion, Volume 12, 1983, page 7



Sterling's Medals :Top - World War II Victory Medal; Left - European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal; Right -Asiatic-Pacific Area Campaign Medal; Bottom - American Campaign Medal

## Qualifications

Sterling was qualified to pilot the following landing craft:

- Landing Craft, Personnel (LCP)
- Landing Craft, Vehicle Personnel (LCVP)
- Landing Craft, Support, Mark 1 (LCS)
- Landing Craft Mechanized (LCM) – Mark II and Mark III classes.

## Record of Leave of Absence<sup>280</sup>

Date Leave Started	Date Leave Ended	Notes
August 10 <sup>th</sup> , 1942	August 15 <sup>th</sup> , 1942	Visited his mother in a Philadelphia hospital. Then spent a few days at home visiting with his family.
December 10 <sup>th</sup> , 1942	December 17 <sup>th</sup> , 1942	Visited his family.
April 21 <sup>st</sup> , 1943	April 28 <sup>th</sup> , 1943	Visited his family.
August 5 <sup>th</sup> , 1943	August 12 <sup>th</sup> , 1943	Visited his family.
August 25 <sup>th</sup> , 1944	October 5 <sup>th</sup> , 1944	Plus 10 days travel time – not charged against accrued time. Location unknown, assumed to be Hawaii or San Diego.
August 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 1945	August 13 <sup>th</sup> , 1945	Visited his family.
October 6 <sup>th</sup> , 1945	October 20 <sup>th</sup> , 1945	Visited his family. Plus 4 days travel time – not charged against accrued time.
October 20 <sup>th</sup> , 1945	October 30 <sup>th</sup> , 1945	Visited his family. Leave extension.

<sup>280</sup> United States Navy, Bureau of Naval Personnel, Discharge Records for Sterling S. Funck, Enlisted Leave Statement, 22 May 1947

## Appendix B: USS Harry Lee – AP-17/APA-10

### Excerpts From DANFS<sup>281</sup> Detailed History of the USS Harry Lee:<sup>282</sup>

The USS *Harry Lee* was originally built as a passenger ship by the New York Shipbuilding Company in 1931 and named *Exochorda*. The ship was originally launched from Camden, NJ.<sup>283</sup> She operated in the Mediterranean for the American Export Lines. The *Exochorda* was acquired by the U.S. Navy on October 30<sup>th</sup>, 1940 and was subsequently converted to a Transport. The *Exochorda* was renamed USS *Harry Lee* and commissioned as AP-17 in late December of 1940.

Following Sterling's transfer to the *Calvert* in October of 1942, the *Harry Lee* was repaired and remained in the area of the Chesapeake until the spring of 1943. By this time the *Harry Lee* had picked up the nick name "Leaning Lena" given her top-heavy appearance and her breakdown just prior to the North African invasion.<sup>284</sup> The *Harry Lee* returned to action and participated in the Sicilian invasion as part of the Western Naval Task Force and then returned to the United States loaded with German and Italian prisoners. In early February 1943 the *Harry Lee* was redesignated APA-10. The *Harry Lee* departed for the Pacific the summer of 1943 and participated in the invasion at Tarawa in November of 1943. The *Harry Lee's* next action was at Kwajalein in early 1944, then continued on to Guadalcanal, New Guinea, and Guam. The *Harry Lee* continued in action at Luzon, Leyte, Iwo Jima, and New Guinea. The *Harry Lee* concluded the war by transporting American veterans home from the Pacific. The *Harry Lee* received seven battle stars for World War II service.

The *Harry Lee* was decommissioned at the Brooklyn Navy Yard in May of 1946. After a period in the Reserve Fleet the *Harry Lee* was sold to Turkey in April of 1948 and subsequently renamed *Tarsus*. In December of 1960 the ship was involved in a three-ship collision in the Bosphorus Strait and was destroyed from the ensuing fire.

### Technical Specifications for the USS Harry Lee:<sup>285</sup>

- Classification: Lee Class Attack Transport
- Maritime Commission Hull Type: N/A
- Displacement/Tonnage:
  - Navy Light: 9,989 tons
  - M.C. Deadweight: Unknown
  - Full Load: Unknown
- Length: 475' 4"
- Beam: 61' 6"
- Draft: 25' 4"
- Speed: 16 knots
- Complement: 453 officers and enlisted crew
- Troop Accommodations: Unknown
- Cargo Capacity: Unknown
- Armament:
  - Four 3"/50 caliber dual purpose gun mounts
  - Four single 40mm caliber gun mounts
- Propulsion: Unknown
- Design Shaft Horsepower: Unknown

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<sup>281</sup> DANFS: Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships

<sup>282</sup> <<http://www.hazegray.org/danfs/auxil/ap17.htm>>

<sup>283</sup> APA Historical Preservation Project, [Lee Class Attack Transports](http://151.203.206.180/apaproject/Classes/Lee/One.asp), <<http://151.203.206.180/apaproject/Classes/Lee/One.asp>>

<sup>284</sup> Atkinson, Page 26.

<sup>285</sup> <<http://www.navsource.org/archives/10/03010.htm>>

## Appendix C: USS Calvert – AP-65/APA-32

### Additional Historical Information on the USS Calvert:

Unless otherwise noted, source of information is the DANFS entry for the USS *Calvert*.<sup>286</sup>

The second *Calvert* (AP-65) was launched 22 May 1942 as *Del Orleans* by Bethlehem-Sparrows Point Shipyard, Inc., under a Maritime Commission contract; sponsored by Mrs. M. G. Fitch; acquired by the Navy 30 September 1942; and commissioned the next day, Captain D. W. Loomis in command. She was reclassified APA-32, 1 February 1943.

Following Sterling's transfer off of the *Calvert*, the ship and crew continued to serve actively in the Pacific. On 20 October 1944 *Calvert* was off Leyte dispatching her troops for the initial landings. She made a quick turn around and was back on 18 November to pour more men and equipment from New Guinea into the Philippines to ensure the Allied advance. At Cape Gloucester she embarked troops for another assault on the Philippines on the 9<sup>th</sup> of January 1945 at Lingayen Gulf to begin the capture of Luzon. The following month, with troops embarked at Biak, *Calvert* successfully landed her assault waves at Mindoro on 9 February. The veteran *Calvert* was now ordered to the west coast for overhaul and conversion to an amphibious flagship, arriving Bremerton 26 March.

The *Calvert* completed her conversion as the war ended in the Pacific, and on 24 August 1945 cleared for the Philippines to lift troops to Hiro Wan for the occupation of Japan. "Magic Carpet" duty, returning troops home to the west coast, was her assignment between 7 November 1945 and 31 May 1946 prior to arrival at Norfolk where she was placed out of commission in reserve 26 February 1947. The *Calvert* received eight battle stars for service in World War II and two for service in Korea and the Navy Unit Commendation in World War II.

With the outbreak of war in Korea in the summer of 1950 *Calvert* was recalled to active service and re-commissioned 18 October 1950. During her two tours in the Far East she trained troops in Japan and Korea, redeployed Korean troops, and transported troops to and from Korea from the west coast. Following this war *Calvert* remained on active service with the fleet, alternating west coast operations with cruises to the western Pacific. During this service she took part in the "Passage to Freedom" operation in the summer of 1954 when she lifted over 6,000 Indochinese civilians from Communist-surrounded Haiphong to southern Viet Nam. In 1958 during the Middle East crisis and Lebanon landings by the 6th Fleet, *Calvert*, combat-loaded, stood ready with the 7th Fleet, alert for any extension of trouble in the Pacific. Alternating west coast operations with cruises to the western Pacific continued through 1960.

Information in Volume 33 of the *Calversion* provides reliable information on the *Calvert's* final fate. The ship was decommissioned on May 18<sup>th</sup>, 1966 and subsequently stricken from the Naval Vessel Register on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1966.<sup>287</sup> Then on March 11<sup>th</sup>, 1977 the *Calvert* was delivered to Levin Metals Corporation on at 1300 hours for purposes of dismantling.<sup>288</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> <<http://www.hazegray.org/danfs/auxil/ap65.htm>>

<sup>287</sup> *Calversion*, Volume 33, Page 6, 1995. Information provided by Tom Glickman.

<sup>288</sup> *Calversion*, Volume 33, Page 7, 1995. Information provided by Tom Glickman.

## Technical Specifications for the USS Calvert:<sup>289</sup>

- Classification: Crescent City Class Transport
- Maritime Commission Hull Type: C3-Delta Type<sup>290</sup>
- Displacement/Tonnage:
  - Navy Light: 8,889 tons<sup>291</sup>
  - M.C. Deadweight: 9,000 tons<sup>292</sup>
  - Full Load: 14,247 tons
- Length: 491'
- Beam: 65' 6"
- Draft: 25' 8"<sup>293</sup>
- Speed: 16 knots.
- Complement:
  - 48 Officers
  - 510 Enlisted
- Troop Accommodations: 1,200 Troops
- Landing Craft Accommodations:
  - 26-30 LCPs and/or LCVPs
  - 2 LCM (3)<sup>294</sup>
- Cargo Capacity:
  - 130,000 cubic feet
  - 2,700 tons
- Armament:
  - One 5"/38 dual purpose gun mount
  - Three single 3"/50 dual purpose gun mounts
  - Two twin 40mm gun mounts
  - Four twin 20mm gun mount
- Propulsion: One General Electric geared steam turbine drive; 2 boilers
- Design Shaft Horsepower: 7,800

## Armament Information:

### 5"/38 DUAL PURPOSE GUN<sup>295</sup>

The 5"/38 semiautomatic dual purpose gun was the mainstay of the U.S. Navy from 1939 until the late 1960s. For short periods, an efficient gun crew could fire off 15 rounds per minute for single mount. The projectile weighed 55 pounds and had an effective range of 18,000 yards.

### 3"/50 DUAL PURPOSE GUN<sup>296</sup>

The 3"/50 was a minor caliber gun. It was a defensive weapon and called dual purpose because it was designed for defense against relatively distant aircraft (distance and altitude) and for work against light surface craft and submarines on the surface. The gun was supported by a pedestal type mount and could be elevated to 85° and depressed to 10°. The gun could fire 45 rounds per minute, had a maximum range of approximately five miles and its ceiling was around 21,500 feet. It fired a 13-pound projectile with each cartridge weighed approximately 25 pounds. Fixed ammunition was used and the projectiles included common antiaircraft, high explosive, shrapnel or illuminating.

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<sup>289</sup> <<http://www.navsource.org/archives/10/03032.htm>>

<sup>290</sup> HyperWar: Maritime Commission Ship Types of World War II C3-Delta Type <<http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USN/ships/ships-mc.html#c3-delta>>

<sup>291</sup> <<http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USN/ships/ships-mc.html#c3-delta>> lists Navy Light as 8,350 tons.

<sup>292</sup> <<http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USN/ships/ships-mc.html#c3-delta>>

<sup>293</sup> <<http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USN/ships/ships-mc.html#c3-delta>> lists the maximum draft of 25'6"

<sup>294</sup> Calversion, Volume 26, 1992, 3. Indicates 4 LCMs could be carried.

<sup>295</sup> Integrated Publishing Close-In Weapon System (CIWS) <[http://www.tpub.com/content/administration/12966/css/12966\\_345.htm](http://www.tpub.com/content/administration/12966/css/12966_345.htm)>

<sup>296</sup> <[http://www.tpub.com/content/administration/12966/css/12966\\_345.htm](http://www.tpub.com/content/administration/12966/css/12966_345.htm)>



#### **40 MM ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUN<sup>297</sup>**

The 40 mm gun was an automatic gun designed for use against aircraft. It operated in both single and automatic fire. It was water cooled, and came in single, twin and quadruple mounts. It could be elevated from -15° to 90°. The gun had a muzzle velocity of 2790 feet per second, a horizontal range of 5420 yards, and a vertical range of 5400 yards. Although the gun was not usually fired until the target is within 2000 yards. Shells were fed into the gun from clips of four, two of which were tracers. The shell exploded on contact, but also contains a self-destructive fuse which was set to explode the shell after 11.5 seconds if it did not strike a target.

#### **20 MM ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUN<sup>298</sup>**

The 20 mm gun was an automatic gun used for close range, high angle fire anti-aircraft defense. The gun was singly mounted on a pedestal and could be trained through 360° and elevated from minus 5° to plus 87°. The gun's rate of fire was approximately 450 rounds per minute with a magazine has a capacity of sixty rounds. At 36° of elevation, the maximum range was approximately 5,500 yards.

### **Additional Information Regarding Crescent City Class Transports:**

Including the USS *Calvert*, a total of four Crescent City Class ships were built. With a troop capacity of 1,200 and ability to support landing craft they helped fill the US Navy's shortage of amphibious ships relatively early in the war. They ships of this class were:<sup>299</sup>

- USS *Crescent City*, APA-21
  - Original Name: *Delorleans*
  - Hull Number: 4338
  - Formerly AP-40
- USS *Charles Carroll*, APA-28
  - Original Name: *Deluruguay*
  - Hull Number: 4362
  - Formerly AP-58
- USS *Calvert*, APA-32
  - Original Name: *Del Orleans*
  - Hull Number: 4363
  - Formerly AP-65
- USS *Monrovia*, APA-31,
  - Original Name: *Delargentino*
  - Hull Number: 4364
  - Formerly AP-64

All four were built at the Bethlehem Steel Corporation's Sparrow Point yard in Maryland for Mississippi Shipping<sup>300</sup> and then transferred to the U.S. Navy in late 1942/early 1943.

The Maryland Steel Company's Sparrows Point shipyard was originally built in 1889 and delivered its first ship in 1891. It was bought by Bethlehem Steel in 1917 and remained in continuous operation until 1993 when it was closed.<sup>301</sup>

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<sup>297</sup> <[http://www.tpub.com/content/administration/12966/css/12966\\_345.htm](http://www.tpub.com/content/administration/12966/css/12966_345.htm)>

<sup>298</sup> <[http://www.tpub.com/content/administration/12966/css/12966\\_345.htm](http://www.tpub.com/content/administration/12966/css/12966_345.htm)>

<sup>299</sup> APA Historical Preservation Project, [Crescent City Class Attack Transports](http://www.apaproject.com/Classes/Crescent/One.asp), <<http://151.203.206.180/apaproject/Classes/Crescent/One.asp>>

<sup>300</sup> Bethlehem Steel Company, [Sparrows Point MD, Record of WWII Shipbuilding](http://www.bethlehemsteel.com/shipbldg/ussbldrs/wwii/merchantshipbuilders/bethsparrowspoint.htm),

<<http://www.coltoncompany.com/shipbldg/ussbldrs/wwii/merchantshipbuilders/bethsparrowspoint.htm>>

<sup>301</sup> Ibid.

## Appendix D: USS Facility AM-233

### Excerpts From DANFS Detailed History of the USS Facility:<sup>302</sup>

The USS *Facility* (AM-233) was launched by the Puget Sound Bridge and Dredging Co., Seattle, Wash., on 22 June 1944, sponsored by Miss Clara Lee Davis; and commissioned on 29 November 1944, Lieutenant C. R. Jennette, USNR, commanding.

The *Facility* underwent shakedown training and proceeded to San Pedro and thence to Pearl Harbor, arriving on 17 February. After escorting Weehawken (CM-12) to Eniwetok early in March, *Facility* began sweeping under the command of TG 52.5 preliminary to the assault landings on Okinawa on 1 April. She continued to support the operation until damaged by a near miss during a heavy suicide attack and was forced to put into Ulithi on 22 April for repairs. She resumed sweeping operations, and, after replenishing supplies in Buckner Bay, joined TG 52.4 to participate with TG 52.3 in clearing the approaches to Nagasaki.

Late in September she swept the Bungo Suido and other areas of the Inland Sea. The rest of the year was occupied in overhaul at Hiro Wan and in sweeping the Van Dieman Straits.

In the first 2 months of 1946 *Facility* journeyed from Sasebo to Saipan, Eniwetok, and Pearl Harbor before making her first return to the States. She underwent overhaul at San Pedro, transited the Panama Canal on 22 March, and on to Galveston, Texas, where she was placed out of commission on 11 September 1946 and stricken from the Navy List on 1 May 1962. [Transcriber's Note: *Facility* was originally laid down as PCE-906. She was transferred to Mexico 2 October 1962 as DM-04.]

*Facility* received three battle stars for World War II service.



Admiral Class Minesweeper, the USS *Incredible*.<sup>303</sup>

<sup>302</sup> Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships Online: <<http://www.hazegray.org/danfs/mine/am233.htm>>

<sup>303</sup> <<http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/sh-usn/usnsh-i/am249.htm>>



## Technical Specifications for the USS Facility:<sup>304</sup>

- Classification: Admirable Class Minesweeper
- Maritime Commission Hull Type: Unknown
- Displacement/Tonnage:
  - Navy Light: 530 tons
  - M.C. Deadweight: 625 tons<sup>305</sup>
  - Full Load: 795 tons
- Length: 184' 6"
- Beam: 33'
- Draft: 9' 9" <sup>306</sup>
- Speed: 15 knots
- Complement: 104
- Armament:
  - One single 3"/50 dual purpose gun mount
  - Two twin 40mm gun mounts
  - Six single 20mm gun mounts
  - One depth charge thrower (hedgehogs)
  - Four depth charge projectiles (K-guns)
  - Two depth charge tracks
- Propulsion: Two 1,710 h.p. Cooper Bessemer diesel engines, two shafts.<sup>307</sup>

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<sup>304</sup> NavSource Online: Mine Warfare Vessel Photo Archive PCE-906 Facility (AM/MSF 233)  
<<http://www.navsource.org/archives/11/02233.htm>>

<sup>305</sup> HyperWar: Ships of the U.S. Navy, 1940-1945, AM-233 USS Facility. <[http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USN/ships/AM/AM-233\\_Facility.html](http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USN/ships/AM/AM-233_Facility.html)>

<sup>306</sup> <[http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USN/ships/AM/AM-233\\_Facility.html](http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USN/ships/AM/AM-233_Facility.html)> lists a draft of 10'

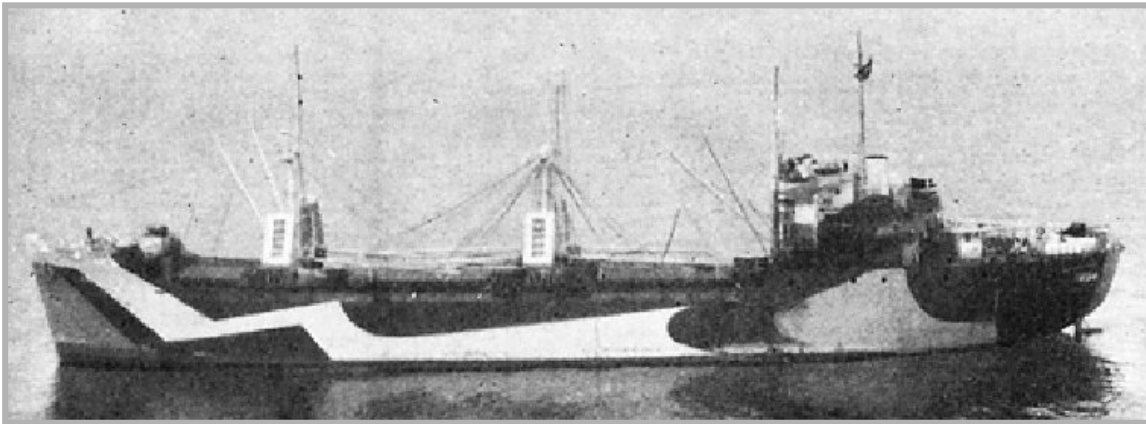
<sup>307</sup> <[http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USN/ships/AM/AM-233\\_Facility.html](http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USN/ships/AM/AM-233_Facility.html)> lists propulsion as Diesel-electric engines, twin screws, 1,800 h.p.

## Appendix E: USS HIDALGO AK-189

### Excerpts From DANFS Detailed History of the USS Hidalgo:<sup>308</sup>

*Hidalgo* (AK-189), a diesel-powered, C1-M-AV1 cargo hull, Alamosa Class Attack Cargo Ship, was launched July 28<sup>th</sup>, 1944 under a Maritime Commission contract by Walter Butler Shipbuilding, Inc., Superior, Wis.; sponsored by Mrs. Claude Pepper, wife of the Senator from Florida; placed in service while being towed to Galveston, Tex., and commissioned August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1945, Lt. John W. Thompson in command.

After conducting a brief shakedown cruise off the coast of Texas, *Hidalgo* sailed to the Canal Zone for routing to the Pacific September, 5<sup>th</sup> 1945, but the war's end brought orders to proceed to Norfolk. The ship arrived in Hampton Roads, March 11<sup>th</sup>, 1946 and decommissioned April 26<sup>th</sup>, 1946. Subsequently, she was sold to Turkey and served as cargo ship *Rize* in merchant service.



Alamosa Class Attack Cargo Ship, the USS *Alamosa*.<sup>309</sup>

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<sup>308</sup> <<http://www.hazegray.org/danfs/auxil/ak189.htm>>

<sup>309</sup> <<http://www.navsource.org/archives/09/130156.htm>>

## Technical Specifications for the USS Hidalgo:<sup>310</sup>

- Classification: Alamosa Class Amphibious/Attack Cargo Ship
- Maritime Commission Hull Type: C1-M-AV1
- Displacement/Tonnage:
  - Navy Light: 2,382 tons
  - M.C. Deadweight: 5,010 tons<sup>311</sup>
  - Full Load: 7,435 tons<sup>312</sup>
- Length: 339'<sup>313</sup>
- Beam: 50'
- Draft: 21'<sup>314</sup>
- Speed: 12 knots<sup>315</sup>
- Armament:
  - One 3"/50 dual purpose gun mount
  - Six 20mm guns
- Complement: 79<sup>316</sup>
- Propulsion: Diesel engines, single screw, 1,700 shaft horse power

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<sup>310</sup> HyperWar: [Ships of the U.S. Navy, 1940-1945, AK Cargo Ships](http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USN/ships/ships-ak.html) <<http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USN/ships/ships-ak.html>>

<sup>311</sup> HyperWar: [Maritime Commission Ship Types of World War II C1-M-AV1 Type](http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USN/ships/ships-mc.html#c1-m-av1) <<http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USN/ships/ships-mc.html#c1-m-av1>>

<sup>312</sup> <<http://hazegray.org/danfs/auxil/ak189.htm> lists full load displacement/tonnage> lists full load displacement as 7,125 tons; <<http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USN/ships/ships-mc.html#c1-m-av1>> lists full load displacement tonnage as 6,240 tons.

<sup>313</sup> <<http://www.navsource.org/archives/09/130189.htm>> lists length as 338'8", while <<http://hazegray.org/danfs/auxil/ak189.htm>> lists length as 338' 6"

<sup>314</sup> <<http://www.navsource.org/archives/09/130189.htm>> lists draft as 21' 1".

<sup>315</sup> <<http://www.navsource.org/archives/09/130189.htm>> lists speed at 11.5 knots.

<sup>316</sup> <<http://www.navsource.org/archives/09/130189.htm>> lists complement at 85.

## Appendix F: Background On “Crossing The Line” Ceremony

The following information details the background on the characters involved in the Crossing the Line ceremony. The information provided below is directly quoted from the cited sources.

### History of Crossing the Line:<sup>317</sup>

The boisterous ceremonies of "crossing the line" are ancient and their derivation is lost. It is well known that ceremonies took place long ago when the ship crossed the thirtieth parallel, and also when going through the Straits of Gibraltar. Early ceremonies were rough and to a great extent supposed to try the crew to determine whether or not the novices on their first cruise could endure the hardships of life at sea. The custom then, as at present, is primarily a crew's party.

The Vikings were reported at an early date to carry out these ceremonies on crossing certain parallels. It is highly probable that the present day ceremony was passed on to the Anglo-Saxons, and Normans from the Vikings. As at earlier times, ceremonies of propitiation are carried on to appease Neptune, the mythological god of the seas. Those who have crossed the line, the equator, are called shellbacks. These Sons of Neptune compose the cast for the present day ceremonies.

Bluejackets treasure the certificate which testifies that "in Latitude 00-00 and Longitude xx-xx," and usually addressed to all Mermaids, Sea Serpents, Whales, Sharks, Porpoises, Dolphins, Skates, Eels, Suckers, Lobsters, Crabs, Pollywogs and other living things of the sea, " \_\_ (name) \_\_ has been found worthy to be numbered as one of our trust shellback, has been gathered to our fold and duly initiated into the solemn mysteries of the ancient order of the deep."

Members of Neptunus Rex's party usually include Davy Jones, Neptune's first assistant, Her Highness Amphitrite, the Royal Scribe, the Royal Doctor, the Royal Dentist, The Royal Baby, The Royal Navigator, The Royal Chaplain, Judges, Attorneys, Barbers and other names that suit the party. The uninitiated are pollywogs or worse, landlubbers.

### Neptunus Rex:<sup>318</sup>

Neptune, or Neptunus Rex as he refers to himself during the ceremony, is the Roman sea god, who originated as the god of fresh water but later became associated with the Greek sea god Poseidon. Poseidon was one of three sons of Kronos: Zeus, Hades, and Poseidon were said to have cast their lots for the three kingdoms of heaven, underworld, and sea. He generally appears with a trident (a three-pronged spear) and his consort, Queen Amphitrite. Triton, a merman son of Poseidon and Amphitrite, occasionally appears in crossing the line ceremonies as well.

### Davy Jones:<sup>319</sup>

There are a number of stories concerning the origins of Davy Jones:

- 1) The Australians tell a tale of a fearsome pirate who sank to the bottom of the sea when crossing the equator and “now patrols the equator on his killer whale boarding any vessel that dares to pass the waters of the Kings Majestic Realm.”
- 2) Some ceremonies list Davy Jones as King Neptune’s Royal Scribe, who verifies that each wog has indeed crossed the line.

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<sup>317</sup> <[http://www-cs-students.stanford.edu/~lswartz/crossing\\_the\\_line.pdf](http://www-cs-students.stanford.edu/~lswartz/crossing_the_line.pdf)>

<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid.

- 3) The most common tale is that he is the evil spirit of the sea, whose name came from a corruption of “Duppy Johah,” duppy being the African West Indies name for “spirit” or “ghost” and Jonah being the Old Testament prophet who was thrown into the sea. To go to “Davy Jones locker” is to be buried at sea
- 4) Another explanation comes from the British, along with a vivid description of his appearance in the Crossing the Line ceremonies: Some English sailors incline to believe that his name is a corruption of Duffer Jones, a clumsy fellow who frequently found himself overboard. The only time Davy comes to life is in the ceremony of crossing the line. Then he is usually impersonated by the smallest sailor onboard, given a hump, horns and a tail, and his features made as ugly as possible. He is swinish, dressed in rags and seaweed, and shambles along in the wake of the sea king, Neptune, playing evil tricks upon his fellow sailors.

Whatever his origin, Davy Jones is certainly, next to King Neptune, the most central figure in the crossing the line ceremony, perhaps due to his mysterious past.

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